













THE  
NEMESIS OF FAITH.

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THE

NEMESIS OF FAITH.

BY

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“ Καὶ μὴν ἔργα γ’ οὐκ ἔτι μύθοι  
Χθρῶν σισάλευται  
. . . . σκιρτᾷ δ’ ἀνέμων  
Πνεύματα πάντων, εἰς ἄλληλα  
Στάσιν ἀντίπνου ἀποδεικνύμενα.”

PROMETHEUS.

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MDCCCXLIX.





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LETTER I.

Huntley Parsonage, September, 4, 1843.

I PROMISED so long ago to write to you, dear Arthur, that by this time, if you have not already forgotten me, you will at least have begun to think it desirable to forget me as soon as possible, for an ungrateful, good-for-nothing fellow; but I am going to be very just, and pay heavy interest—and I think letter debts are like all other debts. If you pay them when they are due, they are taken as a matter of course, and without gratitude; but leave them till your poor creditor leaves off expecting, and then they fall in like a godsend. So I hope you are already delighted at the sight of my handwriting, and when you get to the end of these long sheets, which I am intending to fill to you, I shall be quite back again in my old favour. Perhaps, though, I am too sanguine; I have nothing

but myself to write about, no facts, no theories, no opinions, no adventures, no sentiments, nothing but my own poor barren individualism, of considerable interest to me, but I do not know why I should presume it will be so to you. Egotism is not tiresome, or it ought not to be, if one is sincere about oneself; but it is so hard to be sincere. Well, never mind, I mean to be, and you know me well enough to see through me when I am humbugging. A year has gone since we parted; I have had nothing all this time to tell you, except that I was unsettled and uncomfortable, and why should I trouble you with that? Now you will see I want your help, so now I come to you. It is not that I have had any positive grievance, but I seem to have had hold of every thing by the wrong side. My father is very anxious to see me settled into some profession or other, and here have the three black graces alternately been presenting their charms to me, and I can't get the apple delivered; I turn from one to the other, and the last I look at seems always the ugliest, always has some disagreeable feature I cannot reconcile myself with. I cannot tell why it is, Arthur, but I scarcely know a professional man I can like, and certainly not one who has been what the world calls successful, that I should the least wish to resemble. The roads they have to travel are beaten in by the unscrupulous as well as the scrupulous; they are none of the cleanest, and the race is too fast to give one time to pick one's way. I know men try to keep their private conscience



distinct from their professional conscience, but it does not always do. Their nature, like the dyer's hand, is subdued to what it works in; and you know a lawyer when you see him, or a doctor, or a professional clergyman. They are not simply men, but men of a particular sort, and, unfortunately, something not more but less than men—men who have sacrificed their own selves to become the paid instruments of a system. There may be exceptions where there is very great genius; but I am not a genius, and I cannot trust myself to hope I should be an exception, and so I go round and round, and always end where I began, in difficulties. I believe you know something of my father—a more upright, excellent man never breathed; and though not very clever, yet he has a breadth of solid understanding which, for such creatures as we men are, is far better furniture to be sent into the world with than any cleverness; and I am sure there must be something wrong in my fastidiousness when he so highly disapproves of it. He was contented to laugh at me, you know, as long as I was at college, because my dreaming, as he called it, did not interfere with my succeeding there; but it is quite another thing now, and he urges me again and again, almost with a severity of reproof which is bitterly distressing to me. I have shown talents, he says, of which it is my duty to make use; the common sense of mankind has marked out the best ways to use them, and it is worse than ridiculous in a young man such as I am to set myself up to be dif-

ferent from everybody else, and to be too good to do what many of the best and wisest men he knows, are doing. My brothers were all getting on honourably and steadily, and why was not I? It was true, he allowed, that unscrupulous men did sometimes succeed professionally, but it was not by their faults but by their virtues, by activity and prudence, and manly self-restraint . . . . . He added something which made a deeper impression upon me than this; for all this I had said often and often to myself. I had told him that as I had a small independence, I thought I might wait at least a year or two, and give myself time to understand my own wishes clearly before I committed myself. "You say you wish to be a man, Markham," he answered, "and not a professional man. I do not propose to control you. At your age, and with your talents, you must learn what life is now, not from me, but from life itself; but if you will hear an old man's opinion, I will give it you. If you think you can temper yourself into manliness by sitting here over your books, supposing you will grow into it as a matter of course by a rule of necessity, in the same way as your body grows old, it is the very silliest fancy that ever tempted a young man into his ruin. You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one. Go out into life, you will find your chance there, and only there. You ask to wait. It is like a timid boy waiting on the river bank to take his plunge. The longer he stands shivering the harder

he finds it. At the year's end you will see more difficulties than you see now, because you yourself will have grown feebler. Wait one more, and then you will most likely go on to the end, into your second childhood of helplessness."

What shall I do, Arthur? It is so true every word of this. I feel it is. I know it is; and it is shameful, indeed, to rust into nothingness. Yet what to do! Surely it were kinder far, to train us out from our cradles into a course which should be chosen for us, and make us begin our crawling on the road we are to travel, with spelling-books of law and physic, and nursery courts of justice, or diseased dolls to lecture or to doctor. All would be so easy then; we should form each about our proper centre, and revolve calmly and surely in the orbit into which we were projected. It is a frightful business to bring us up to be only men, and then bid us choose for ourselves one of three roads which are to take us down again. For they do take us down. Unless we are in Fortune's best books, and among those same lucky sons of genius, for law or physic, we must learn a very dirty lesson, and train our lips into very smooth chicanery, or it is slow enough her wheel will move with us. Speak the truth, and the truth only, and in the first you are a fool, and in the second you are a brute. "Ah, well, but at least the Church is open to you," you will say, and that is what my father says. There the most fastidious person will find the purest course he could mark down for himself fall infinitely short



of what is required of him. And you believe I always intended to be a clergyman; yes, and it is true. I always did intend it; and if you could tell the envy with which I watch my friends passing in within the precincts of its order into what ought to be the holiest and happiest of lives; alas! here too I seem to be barred out, and one of my worst sorrows is that I cannot tell my father why I am. I will tell you, Arthur, but not now. I must think well over what I am to write on that subject, and you shall have another letter about it. But, oh, what a happy life that is! I cannot understand why, as a body, clergymen are so fatally uninteresting; they who through all their waking hours ought to have for their one thought the deepest and most absorbing interests of humanity. It is the curse of making it a profession—a road to get on upon, to succeed in life upon. The base stain is apparent in their very language, too sad an index of what they are. Their “*duty*,” what is it?—to patter through the two Sunday services. For a little money one of them will undertake the other’s *duty* for him. And what do they all aim at?—getting livings! not cures of souls, but *livings*; something which will keep their wretched bodies living in the comforts they have found indispensable. What business have they, any one of them, with a thought of what becomes of their poor wretched selves at all? To hear them preaching, to hear the words they use in these same duties of theirs, one would suppose they really believed that getting on,

and getting rich, and getting comfortable, were quite the last things a Christian should propose to himself. They certainly say so. Alas! with the mass of them, the pulpit keeps its old meaning, and is but a stage. Off the stage there is the old prate of the old world stories, the patronage of this rich man and that, the vacant benefice or cathedral stall. So and so, lucky fellow, has married a bishop's daughter, and the bishop himself has the best dressed wife and the best equipage in London; and oh, bitterest satire of all! the very pulpit eloquence with which they can paint the better life, the beauty of Christianity, is valued only but as a means of advancing them into what they condemn. Yet this need not be, and this is not what I shrink from. The Church is an ill-paid profession, and so of the men who make a profession the main thing in this life of ours, it must be contented with the refuse of the educated. Not more than one in fifty takes orders who has a chance in any other line; but there is this one in each fifty, and so noble some of these units are, that they are not only enough for the salt of their class, but for the salt of the world too. Men who do indeed spend their lives among the poor and the suffering, who go down and are content to make a home in those rivers of wretchedness that run below the surface of this modern society, asking nothing but to shed their lives, to pour one drop of sweetness into that bitter stream of injustice: oh, Arthur, what men they are! what a duty that might be! I think if it is

true what they say who profit by this modern system; if there is indeed no help for it, and an ever increasing multitude of miserable beings must drag on their wretched years in toil and suffering that a few may be idle and enjoy; if there be no hope for them; if to-morrow must be as to-day, and they are to live but to labour, and when their strength is spent, are but to languish out an unpensioned old age on a public charity which degrades what it sustains; if this be indeed the lot which, by an irrevocable decree, it has pleased Providence to stamp upon the huge majority of mankind, incomparably the highest privilege which could be given to any one of us is to be allowed to sacrifice himself to them, to teach them to hope for a more just hereafter, and to make their present more endurable by raising their minds to endure it. I have but one comfort in thinking of the poor, and that is, that we get somehow adjusted to the condition in which we grow up, and we do not miss the absence of what we have never enjoyed. They do not wear out faster, at least not much faster, than the better favoured; that is, if you may reckon up life by years, and if such as we leave them may be called life. Oh what a clergyman might do! To have them all for an hour at least each week collected to be taught by him, really wishing to listen, if he will but take the trouble to understand them, and to learn what they require to be told. How sick one is of all sermons, such as they are! Why will men go on thrashing over and again the old withered



straw that was thrashed out centuries ago, when every field is waving with fresh, quite other, crops craving for their hand? Is it indolence or folly? What is it? I could linger on for hours over an employment I so much long for. It seems to be mine, as I dwell upon it; so entirely it is all I crave for; I have not talent enough to create fresh thought for strong cultivated men; but it has always been my delight to translate downwards what others have created; and I have been so much about among the poor, and with all their faults and all their ignorance, I love their simple hearty ways so much that I could say with all my heart I felt myself *called*, as the Prayer Book says, to be their teacher; and yet, and yet . . . well, good bye, and bear with me.

Your affectionate

M. SUTHERLAND.

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## LETTER II.

September 6.

“WHAT possible reason can I have for not taking orders?” you may well ask. I promised to tell you, and I will; yet I know not what you will think of me when I have done so. Wherever as yet I have even dared to hint my feelings, I have been met by looks so cold and withering that I tremble at exposing them even to you. O, Arthur, do not—do not make my trial harder—do not you leave me too—do not make me lose my

oldest, my only friend. Do not be frightened, I have committed no crime, at least nothing which I can conceive to be a crime; and yet they say it is one. Arthur, before I can be made a clergyman, I must declare that I unfeignedly believe all "the canonical writings of the Old Testament;" and I cannot. What does it mean—unfeignedly believe it all? That all the actions related there are good, and all the opinions true? Not that, of course; because then all that Job's friends said would be as true as what Elihu said, and Lot's actions as good as Abraham's. But, I suppose, we are to believe that all those books were written by men immediately inspired by God to write them, because He thought them good for the education of mankind; that whatever is told in those books as a fact is a real fact, and that the Psalms and Prophecies were composed under the dictation of the Holy Spirit. Now I am not going to weary you with all the scientific difficulties and critical difficulties, and, worse than all, metaphysical difficulties, which have worn the subject so threadbare; though I think but badly of this poor modern sophistry of ours, which stumbles on between its two opinions, and, when it is hunted to its death, runs its head into the sand and will not see what it does not like to see. If there were no difficulties but these, and only my reason were perplexed, I could easily school my reason; I could tell myself that God accommodated His revelations to the existing condition of mankind, and wrote in their language. But, Arthur, bear

with me, and at least hear me; though my head may deceive me, my heart cannot. I will not, I must not, believe that the all-just, all-merciful, all-good God can be such a Being as I find him there described. He! He! to have created mankind liable to fall—to have laid them in the way of a temptation under which He knew they would fall, and then curse them and all who were to come of them, and all the world, for their sakes; jealous, passionate, capricious, revengeful, punishing children for their fathers' sins, tempting men, or at least permitting them to be tempted into blindness and folly, and then destroying them. O, Arthur, Arthur! this is not a Being to whom I could teach poor man to look up to out of his sufferings in love and hope. What! that with no motive but His own will He chose out arbitrarily, for no merit of their own, as an eastern despot chooses his favourites, one small section of mankind, leaving all the world besides to devil-worship and lies; that the pure, truth-loving Persian of the mountains, who morning and night poured out his simple prayer to the Universal Father for the good of all His children; that the noble Greeks of Marathon and Thermopylæ, the austere and stately Romans, that then these were outcasts, aliens, devil-worshippers; and that one strange people of fanatics so hideously cruel that even women and children fell in slaughtered heaps before their indiscriminating swords, that these alone were the true God's true servants; that God bid them do these things, and, exulting in their successful vengeance as a vindication of His honour, compelled the spheres



out of their courses to stand still and assist the murdering! . . . . . And why all this murdering? Sometimes for sins committed five centuries past; while, for those five centuries, generation was let go on to follow generation in a darkness out of which no deliverance was offered them; for Israel monopolized God. It is nothing to say these were exceptive peculiar cases. The nation to whom they were given never thought them peculiar cases. And what is Revelation if it is but a catalogue of examples, not which we are, but which we are not, to follow? No, Arthur! this is not God. This is a fiend. Oh, surely this is not the faith of men who worshipped the Father of mankind, but rather of the followers of a god who was but one of many a god among gods—the God of Israel, as Baal was the god of the nations; and I cannot think the disputes and jealousies of Heaven are tried and settled by the swords of earth. No! If I may believe that the Jews were men like the rest, and distinguished from the rest not by any difference in kind in the nature of their relations with Heaven, but by their own extraordinary character; that, more than any set of men who ever lived, they realised the life and active energy of God upon earth—that *they believed* they were the favourites of Heaven—and that, in spite of the savage fanaticism into which it sometimes plunged them, their faith did in a way make them what they professed to be, and produced fruits of a most wonderful kind—all is easy to me then. Winning Canaan by strength, it was natural they, or at least their

children, should think that God had given it them; and in those fierce and lawless times many dreadful things might be done, which at least we can understand and allow for, though in sorrow. But that the unchanging God should have directly prompted, should have interfered to assist in what humanity shudders at while it reads—oh, I would sooner perish for ever than stoop down before a Being who may have power to crush me, but whom my heart forbids me to reverence. It runs through the whole Old Testament this feeling, with but a few great exceptions, and it is little use to make particulars. David may have been the man after God's heart if the Israelites were His peculiar people; and the furious zealots in the last desperate wars in Palestine were the same people as their fathers who slaughtered Amalek. David himself is the great type of the race in his savageness and in his piety! Who could believe that the same man who wrote the *De profundis Domini* could have craved to wash his footsteps in his enemy's blood? The war of good and evil is mightiest in mightiest souls, and even in the darkest time the heart will maintain its right against the hardest creed. Bear with me, Arthur, we read the Bible with very different eyes. For myself, the most delightful trait in the entire long history is that golden thread of humanity which winds along below the cruelty of the exclusive theory, and here and there appears in protest, in touches of deeper sympathy for its victims, than are ever found for the more highly-favoured. Who are

those who most call out our tears? Is it not the outcast mother setting down her child that she may not see it die, the injured Esau, the fallen Saul, Aiah's daughter watching by her murdered children, or that unhappy husband who followed his wife weeping all along the road as David's minions were dragging her to his harem?

If the Church is a profession, I know all this is very weak and very foolish; one might enter it then, accepting what it insists upon, in the same way as the lawyer takes the laws as he finds them, not perhaps as he would have them if he had to choose, but as facts existing which it is not his place to quarrel with. And many sensible people do accept the Bible in this way, they take it as it stands; they are not responsible, and they are contented to draw reasonable doctrines from it, gliding over what is inconvenient. I know, too, there are some excellent, oh, most excellent people, deep and serious people, who do not find the difficulties there at all which I find, and accept it all with awe and fear, perhaps, but still with a real, serious conviction that it is all true. Perhaps it is. And then I . . . I . . . am . . . am . . .

And then there is another thing, Arthur, which seems to be taught, not in the Old Testament but in the New, which I should have to say I believed; a doctrine this, not a history, and a doctrine so horrible that it could only have taken root in mankind when they were struggling in the perplexities of Manicheism, and believed that the Devil held a



divided empire with God. I mean that the largest portion of mankind, these very people who live about us, feel with us, act with us, are our daily companions—the people we meet at dinner or see in the streets, that are linked in with us with innumerable ties of common interests, common sympathies, common occupations—these very people are to be tortured for ever and ever in unspeakable agonies. My God! and for what? They are thrown out into life, into an atmosphere impregnated with temptation, with characters unformed, with imperfect natures out of which to form them, under necessity of a thousand false steps, and yet with every one scored down for vengeance; and laying up for themselves a retribution so infinitely dreadful that our whole soul shrinks horror-struck before the very imagination of it; and this under the decree of an all-just, all-bountiful God—the God of love and mercy. O, Arthur! when a crime of one of our fallen brothers comes before ourselves to judge, how unspeakably difficult we find it to measure the balance of the sin; cause winding out of cause, temptation out of temptation; and the more closely we know the poor guilty one, the nature with which he was born, the circumstances which have developed it, how endlessly our difficulty grows upon us!—how more and more it seems to have been inevitable, to deserve (if we may use the word deserve) not anger and punishment, but tears and pity and forgiveness. And for God who knows all! who not only knows all but who determined all—

who dealt us out our natures and placed us as it pleased Him! "what more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done?" Alas! then, if Omnipotence could not bring but wild grapes there, why was the poor vineyard planted? It never asked to be. Why fling it out here into these few miserable years; when it cannot choose but fall to ruin, and then must be thrown into hell-fire for ever? . . . . I cannot tell. It may be from some moral obliquity in myself, or from some strange disease; but for me, and I should think too for every human being in whose breast a human heart is beating, to know that one single creature is in that dreadful place would make a hell of heaven itself. And they have hearts in heaven, for they love there. Justice! what justice! I believe that fallen creatures perish, perish for ever, for only good can live, and good has not been theirs; but how durst men forge our Saviour's words "eternal *death*" into so horrible a meaning? And even if he did use other words, and seem to countenance such a meaning for them (and what witness have we that He did, except that of men whose ignorance or prejudice might well have interpreted these words wrongly as they did so many others?) . . . . But I am on dangerous ground; only it seems to me that it would be as reasonable to build a doctrine on every poet's metaphor, or lecture on the organic structure of the Almighty because it is said the *scent* of Noah's sacrifice pleased Him, as to build theories of the everlasting destiny of mankind on a single vehe-

ment expression of one whose entire language was a figure.

I know but one man, of more than miserable intellect, who in these modern times has dared defend eternal punishment on the score of *justice*, and that is Leibnitz; a man who, if I know him rightly, chose the subject from its difficulty as an opportunity for the display of his genius, and cared so little for the truth that his conclusions did not cost his heart a pang, or wring a single tear from him. And what does Leibnitz say? That sin, forsooth, though itself be only *finite*, yet, because it is against an Infinite Being, contracts a character of infinity, and so must be infinitely punished. It is odd that the clever Leibnitz should not have seen that a *finite punishment*, inflicted by the same Infinite Being, would itself of course contract the same *character of infinity*. But what trifling all this is, Arthur! The heart spurns metaphysics, and one good honest feeling tears their shrivelled spider webs to atoms. No, if I am to be a minister of religion, I must teach the poor people that they have a Father in heaven, not a tyrant; one who loves them *all* beyond power of heart to conceive; who is sorry when they do wrong, not angry; whom they are to love and *dread*, not with caitiff coward fear, but with deepest awe and reverence, as the all-pure, all-good, all-holy. I could never fear a God who kept a hell prison-house. No, not though he flung me there because I refused. There is a power stronger than such a one; and it is possible



to walk unscathed even in the burning furnace. What! am I to tell these poor millions of sufferers, who struggle on their wretched lives of want and misery, starved into sin, maddened into passion by the fiends of hunger and privation, in ignorance because they were never taught, and with but enough of knowledge to feel the deep injustice under which they are pining; am I to tell them, I say, that there is no hope for them here, and less than none hereafter; that the grave is but a precipice off which all, all of them, save here one and there one, will fall down into another life, to which the worst of earth is heaven? "Why, why," they may lift up their torn hands and cry in bitter anger, "why, Almighty One, were we ever born at all, if it was but for this?" Nay, I suppose the happiest, the most highly favoured, of mankind looking back over a long unchequered life, where all the best and highest which earth has to give her children has been scattered at their feet, looking back and telling over their days, might count upon their fingers the hours which they had lived, which were worth the pains it cost their mother to bear them. And all for this! No, Arthur, no! I never can teach this; I would not so dishonour God as to lend my voice to perpetuate all the mad and foolish things which men have dared to say of Him. I believe that we may find in the Bible the highest and purest religion . . . . most of all in the history of Him in whose name we all are called. His religion—not *the Christian religion*, but *the religion*

*of Christ*—the poor man's gospel; the message of forgiveness, of reconciliation, of love; and, oh, how gladly would I spend my life, in season and out of season, in preaching this! But I must have no hell terrors, none of these fear doctrines; they were not in the early creeds, God knows whether they were ever in the early gospels, or ever passed His lips. He went down to hell, but it was to break the chains, not to bind them. Advise me—oh, advise me! I cannot stand by myself—I am not strong enough, without the support of system and position, to work an independent way; and my father and my friends too, it would be endless bitterness with them. Advise me! No, you cannot advise me! With what absurd childishness one goes on asking advice of people, knowing all the while that only *one's self* can judge, and yet shrinking from the responsibility; only do not hate me, Arthur—do not write me cold stuffy letters about my state of mind. For Heaven's sake, if you love me, if you ever loved me, spare me that. Show me if I am wrong. It is easy to be mistaken. But do not tell me it is wicked of me to have thought all this, for *it is not*—I am certain it is not.

M. S.

## LETTER III.

September 11.

I DID not say half I wished to say, Arthur: ever since I wrote I have been thinking how confusedly and stupidly I expressed myself. Somehow one never has one's thoughts in the right place when they are wanted, either for writing or for talking; and it is only after, when they can do no good, that the stupid helpless things come poking up into one's mind. "This is what I wanted; this is what I ought to have said," you think; you catch him, and he is a Proteus in your fingers, and you have only got a monster, half human and half beast. Ah, well, it is ill laughing with a heavy heart. I will try again. At any rate you will be clever enough to see what I mean. I suppose most people would allow they found some difficulties at any rate with the Old Testament, when I find insuperable ones, only they cannot feel them as I do. To believe, for instance, that God worked miracles to plague a nation for their ruler's sins, ought to make their lives intolerable. Perhaps if it all really is as they say, a certain apathy of heart is one of the rewards of their implicit faith to save them from its consequences.

But why do they believe it at all? They must say because it is in the Bible. Yes, here it is. Other books we may sit in judgment upon, but not upon the Bible. That is the exception, the one book which is wholly and entirely true. And we are to



believe whatever is there, no matter how monstrous, on the authority of God. He has told us, and that is enough. But how do they know He has told us. The Church says so. Why does the Church say so? Because the Jews said so. And how do we know the Jews could not be mistaken? Because *they said* they were God's people, and God guided them. One would have thought if this were so, He would have guided them in the interpreting their books too, and we ought to be all Jews now. But, in the name of Heaven, what is the history of those books which we call the Old Testament? No one knows who the authors were of the greater part of them, or even at what date they were written. They make no claim to be inspired themselves; at least only the prophets make such claim; before the captivity there was no collection at all; they had only the Book of the Law, as it is called, of which they took such bad care that what that was none of us now know. The Pentateuch has not the slightest pretensions to be what Moses read in the ears of all the people, and Joshua wrote upon twelve stones. There is no doubt at all that it was written, or at least compiled into its present form, long long after. All we can make out is, that in the later and fallen age of the Jews, when their imaginative greatness had forsaken them, when they were more than half Chaldaicized, and their high enthusiastic faith and passionate devotion to their God had dwindled down into intolerant arrogance and barren fanaticism, wishing to console themselves for their present de-

gradation by the glory of the past, they made a collection out of the wreck of the old literature. Digests, like the Books of Chronicles were compiled out of the fragments of the old Prophets; the whole was then cast together in one great mould, where of course God was the founder; the number of books, sentences, words, syllables, letters, were all counted, and sealed with mystical meanings, and behold the one complete entire Divine Revelation of the Almighty, composed, compiled, and finished by Himself. Were ever such huge pretensions hung upon so slight a thread? And the worst is, that by this tinsel veil we have hung before it, the real splendour of the Bible is so entirely hidden from us; what with our arbitrary chapter readings cutting subjects into pieces, our commentaries and interpretations, built not on laboured examination of what the people were for whom and by whom the books were written, but piled together hap-hazard out of polemic lucubrations as if they were all prophecies, and their meanings fixed by after history; with the unfathomed dulness of our Service, in which the *Venite Exultemus* is followed by the *Miserere mei Domine* in the same dull, stupid, soulless tone, as if it was a barrel organ that was playing them, and not a human voice speaking out of human heart. Oh, what are we doing but making a very idol of the Bible, treating it as if we supposed that to read out of it and in it had mechanical virtue, like spells and charms—that it worked not as thought upon thought, but by some juggling process of talismanic mate-

rialism. Oh, Heavens! how our hearts bleed with the poor mourners by the waters of Babylon; how we exult with them, and share their happiness in the glorious hymns they poured out on their return, if we may believe that it was they themselves whose souls were flowing out there in passionate simplicity. But how are we flung back upon ourselves perplexed, confused, and stupified, when we are told that all this is, as Coleridge calls it, but a kind of superhuman ventriloquism—that the voice and the hearts of the singers no more made this music than the sun clock makes the hours which it marks upon the dial-plate! And then all David's prayers in his banishment. What, were they not prayers then? Not his prayers as his broken spirit flung itself upon God, but model prayers which God was making for mankind, and using but David's lips to articulate them into form? Ah, well! The Mahometans say their Koran was written by God. The Hindoos say the Vedas were; we say the Bible was, and we are but interested witnesses in deciding absolutely and exclusively for ourselves. If it be immeasurably the highest of the three, it is because it is not the most divine but the most human. It does not differ from them in kind; and it seems to me that in ascribing it to God we are doing a double dishonour; to ourselves for want of faith in our soul's strength, and to God in making Him responsible for our weakness. There is nothing in it but what men might have written; much, oh much, which it would drive me mad to think any but men,



and most mistaken men, had written. Yet still as a whole, it is by far the noblest collection of sacred books in the world; the outpouring of the mind of a people in whom a larger share of God's spirit was for many centuries working than in any other of mankind, or who at least most clearly caught and carried home to themselves the idea of the direct and immediate dependence of the world upon Him. It is so good that as men looked at it they said this is too good for man: nothing but the inspiration of God could have given this. Likely enough men should say so; but what might be admired as a metaphor, became petrified into a doctrine, and perhaps the world has never witnessed any more grotesque idol worship than what has resulted from it in modern Bibliolatry. And yet they say we are not Christians, we cannot be religious teachers, nay, we are without religion, we are infidels, unless we believe with them. We have not yet found the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Infidels, Arthur! Ah, it is a hard word! The only infidelity I know is to distrust God, to distrust his care of us, his love for us. And yet that word! How words cling to us, and like an accursed spell force us to become what they say we have become. When I go to church, the old church of my old child days, when I hear the old familiar bells, with their warm sweet heart music, and the young and the old troop by along the road in their best Sunday dresses, old well-known faces, and young unknown ones, which by and by will grow to be so

like them, when I hear the lessons, the old lessons, being read in the old way, and all the old associations come floating back upon me, telling me what I too once was, before I ever doubted things were what I was taught they were; oh, they sound so sad, so bitterly sad. The tears rise into my eyes; the church seems full of voices, whispering round me, Infidel, Infidel, Apostate; all those believing faces in their reverent attention glisten with reproaches, so calm, they look so dignified, so earnestly composed. I wish—I wish I had never been born. Things grow worse and worse at home. Little things I have let fall are turned against me. The temperature is getting very cold, and our once warm and happy family, where every feeling used to flow so sweetly together in one common stream, seems freezing up, at least wherever I am, into disunited ice crystals. Arthur, Arthur, the sick heart often wants a warm climate as well as the sick body. They talk in whispers before me. Religious subjects are pointedly avoided. If I say anything myself, I am chilled with frosty monosyllables, and to no one soul around me can I utter out a single thought. What! Do they fancy it is any such wonderful self-indulgence, this being compelled to doubt what they stay trusting in? That it is a license for some strange sin? No, no, no. And yet they are right too—yes, it is very good, and very right. They are only following the old lesson, which I followed too once, that belief comes of obedience; and that it is only for disobedience that it is taken from us. My father says



before them, that I am indolent and selfish; and the rest seems all of a piece and a part of the same thing . . . . Yet God is my witness, nothing which I ever believed has parted from me, but it has been torn up by the roots bleeding out of my heart. Oh! that tree of knowledge, that death in life. Why, why are we compelled to know anything, when each step gained in knowledge is but one more nerve summoned out into consciousness of pain? Better, far better, if what is happier is better, to live on from day to day, from year to year, caring only to supply the wants each moment feels, leaving earth to care for earth, and the present for the present, and never seeking to disentomb the past, or draw the curtain of the future. Suppose I was to write a book, Arthur, and say I was inspired to write it—like Emmanuel Swedenborg—a madhouse would be the best place for me, because common sense would at once pass sentence on the pretension, and if it did not, the poor book would be its own sentence. But no one dreams that there is anything improbable in the Jewish writers having been inspired; and they will not let us try the books by their contents. No, it is written, they say, and so we must believe. Was there ever such a jumble of arguments? The Bible is its own evidence, because it is so pure and holy. This and that thing we find in parts of it seems neither pure nor holy; but because it is there, we must believe it—on some other evidence therefore—on what, then? on the witness of the Church.



The Church proves the Bible, and the Bible proves the Church—cloudy pillars rotating upon air—round and round the theory goes whirling like the summer wind-gusts. It has been the sacred book by which for so many centuries so many human souls have lived, and prayed, and died. So have the Vedas, so has the Koran, so has the Zenda Vesta. As many million souls day after day have watched the sun rise for their morning prayer, and followed its setting by committing themselves to God's care for protection in the darkness from the powers of night, have lived humble, God-fearing lives, and gone to their graves with the same trust of a life beyond waiting all who have been faithful to those books—as many, or more, perhaps, than the Christians—no, there is no monopoly of God's favour. The evidence of religion—ah, I know where the true evidence lies, by the pleadings of my own heart against me. Why, why must it be that all these alien histories, these strange theories and doctrines, should be all sown in together in the child seed-bed with the pure grain of Christianity? so that in after years it is impossible to root them out without trampling over rudely on the good. And we must do it. They may be harmless, growing there unrecognised; but known for what they are, their poison opens then, and they or we must die. Arthur, is it treason to the Power which has given us our reason, and willed that we shall use it, if I say I would gladly give away all I am, and all I ever may become, all the years, every one of them

which may be given me to live, but for one week of my old child's faith, to go back to calm and peace again, and then to die in hope. Oh for one look of the blue sky as it looked then when we called it Heaven! The old black wood lies round the house as it lay then, but I have no fear now of its dark hollow, of the black glades under its trees. There are no fairies and no ghosts there any more; only the church bells and the church music have anything of the old tones, and they are silent, too, except at rare, mournful, gusty intervals. Whatever after evidence we may find, if we are so happy as to find any, to strengthen our religious convictions, it is down in childhood their roots are struck, and it is on old association that they feed. Evidence can be nothing but a stay to prevent the grown tree from falling; it can never make it grow or assist its powers of life. The old family prayers, which taught us to reverence prayer, however little we understood its meaning; the far dearer private prayers at our own bedside; the dear friends for whom we prayed; the still calm Sunday, with its best clothes and tiresome services, which we little thought were going so deep into our heart, when we thought them so long and tedious; yes, it is among these so trifling seeming scenes, these, and a thousand more, that our faith has wound among our heartstrings; and it is the thought of these scenes now which threatens me with madness as I call them up again.



## LETTER IV.

Sept. 13.

I CAN do nothing but write to you, dear Arthur. You must bear with me—I am sure you will; it is so inexpressible a relief to me. My feelings have begun to flow to you, and it is unsafe to check an opening wound. I find little pleasure enough in being at home: all day in the beautiful autumn I wander about by myself, and listen to what my heart is saying to me; and then in the evening I creep back and hide myself in my little room and write it all down for you. I wonder whether I am serious in wishing to die. I certainly am in wishing I had never been born; and at least it seems to me that if I was told I was to go with this summer's leaves, it would do more to make me happy for the weeks they have got to hang upon the trees, than any other news which could be brought to me. I love the autumn. I love to watch my days dropping off one by one before the steady blowing time. You and I, Arthur, are but twenty-four, and your life is just beginning and mine seems to be done. It is well for me that I was never very hopeful; and the sweetest moments I can have now are when I stray at evening alone along the shore and watch the sea-birds as they sweep away after the sun on their gilded gleaming wings, or when the swallows are gathering for their long flight to bright smiling lands one knows not where. Some hope there is in their parting beauty, even when they seem to leave us desolate; and as the sweet planets come out above the purple



twilight, they are opening glimpses into some other world to which peace has flown away, and I, perhaps, may follow. There is a village in the wood, two or three miles from here—there was an abbey there once. But there is nothing left of the abbey but its crumbling walls, and it serves only for a burying-ground and for sentimental picnic parties. I was there to-day; I sat there a long time, I do not know how long—I was not conscious of the place. I was listening to what it was saying to me. I will write it down and look at it, and you shall look at it: an odd enough subject for a Christian ruin to choose—it began to talk about paganism. “Do you know what paganism means?” it said. Pagani, Pagans, the old country villagers. In all history there is no more touching word than that one of Pagan.

In the great cities where men gather in their crowds and the work of the world is done, and the fate of the world is determined, there it is that the ideas of succeeding eras breed and grow and gather form and power, and grave out the moulds for the stamp of after ages. There it was, in those old Roman times, that the new faith rose in its strength, with its churches, its lecture-rooms, its societies. It threw down the gorgeous temples, it burnt their carved cedar work, it defiled the altars and scattered the ashes to the winds. The statues were sanctified and made the images of saints, the augurs' colleges were rudely violated, and they who were still faithful were offered up as martyrs, or scattered as wanderers over the face of the earth, and the old gods

were expelled from their old dominion—the divinity of nature before the divinity of man. . . . Change is strong, but habit is strong too; and you cannot change the old for new, like a garment. Far out in the country, in the woods, in the villages, for a few more centuries, the deposed gods still found a refuge in the simple minds of simple men, who were contented to walk in the ways of their fathers—to believe where they had believed, to pray where they had prayed. What was it to these, the pomp of the gorgeous worship, the hierarchy of saints, the proud cathedral, and the thoughts which shook mankind? Did not the sky bend over them as of old in its calm beauty, the sun roll on the same old path, and give them light and warmth and happy sunny hearts? The star-gods still watched them as they slept—why should they turn away? why seek for newer guardians? Year by year the earth put on her robes of leaves and sweetest flowers—the rich harvests waved over the corn-fields, and the fruit-trees and the vineyards travailed as of old; winter and summer, spring and autumn, rain and sunshine, day and night, moving on in their never-ending harmony of change. The gods of their fathers had given their fathers these good things; had their power waxed slack? Was not their powerful hand stretched out still? Pan, almighty Pan! He had given, and he gave still. Who watched over the travail pangs of the poor ewes at the breeding time? Pan, almighty Pan! Who taught the happy shepherd to carve his love-notes in the invisible air, and fill the summer nights with softest,

sweetest flute music? Pan, almighty Pan! Had the water-nymphs forsaken their grottoes where the fountains were flowing as of old? Were the shadows of the deep woods less holy? Did the enchanted nightingale speak less surely the tale of her sorrow? As it was in the days of their fathers so it was in theirs—their fathers had gone down to the dust in the old ways, and so would they go down and join them. They sought no better; alike in death as in their life, they would believe where they had believed, though the creed was but a crumbling ruin; sacrifice where they had sacrificed; hope as they hoped; and die with them too! Who shall say that those poor peasants were not acting in the spirit we most venerate, most adore; that theirs was not the true heart language which we cannot choose but love? And what has been their reward? They have sent down their name to be the by-word of all after ages; the worst reproach of the worst men—a name convertible with atheism and devil-worship.

“And now look at me,” the old ruin said; “centuries have rolled away, the young conqueror is decrepit now; dying, as the old faith died, in the scenes where that faith first died; and lingering where it lingered. The same sad sweet scene is acting over once again. I was the college of the priests, and they are gone, and I am but a dead ruin where the dead bury their dead. The village church is outliving me for a few more generations; there still ring, Sunday after Sunday, its old reverend bells, and there come still the simple peasants in their simple dresses—pastor



and flock still with the old belief; there beneath its walls and ruins they still gather down into the dust, fathers and children sleeping there together, waiting for immortality; wives and husbands resting side by side in fond hope that they shall wake and link again the love-chain which death has broken; so simple, so reverend, so beautiful! Yet is not that, too, all passing away, away beyond recall? The old monks are dead. The hermit-saints and hallowed relics are dust and ashes now. The fairies dance no more around the charmed forest ring. They are gone, gone even here. The creed still seems to stand; but the creed is dead in the thoughts of mankind. Its roots are cut away, down where alone it can gather strength for life, and other forms are rising there; and once again, and more and more, as day passes after day, the aged faith of aged centuries will be exiled as the old was to the simple inhabitants of these simple places. Once, once for all, if you would save your heart from breaking, learn this lesson—once for all you must cease, in this world, to believe in the eternity of any creed or form at all. Whatever grows in time is a child of time, and is born and lives, and dies at its appointed day like ourselves. To be born in pain and nursed in hardship, a bounding imaginative youth, a strong vigorous manhood, a decline which refuses to believe it is a decline, and still asserts its strength to be what it was, a decrepit old age, a hasty impatient heir, and a death-bed made beautiful by the abiding love of some few true-hearted friends; such is the round of

fate through nature, through the seasons, through the life of each of us, through the life of families, of states, of forms of government, of creeds. It was so, it is so, it ever shall be so. Life is change, to cease to change is to cease to live; yet if you may shed a tear beside the death-bed of an old friend, let not your heart be silent on the dissolving of a faith."

This is what the old ruin said to me, Arthur. Arthur, did the ruin speak true?

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#### LETTER V.

Sept. 20.

THINGS grow worse and worse with me at home; my brothers are all away, lucky fellows, happy and employed. Oh, how I envy them. Letters come home, such bright sunny letters. They are getting on so well, Henry has just got his epaulets, and his captain took the occasion of writing a most polite letter to my father about it. He said he promised to be one of the most excellent officers in the service, and so much more than merely a sailor, nice fellow, that he is; and his highest pleasure seems to be the pleasure he knows his success will give my father. Then for James and Frederick; you know they are both younger than I am, yet James is already a junior partner in the house, and Frederick tells us he is intending to strike for wages, as all the hardest cases in his master's office are handed

over to him; they seem born to get on, and when they come here, it is such an entire happy hearty holiday with them, riding, hunting, shooting, balls, and parties; they are the life of everything about us; while poor I—I, who was once expected too to be a credit to myself, am doing nothing and can do nothing. I cannot work, for there is nothing I can work upon, and yet I never have a holiday, my wretched thoughts cling about me like evil spirits. I have no taste for what is called amusement. I suppose I do not like hunting and shooting, but I say to myself that I think it wrong to make my pleasures out of helpless creatures' pain; and for the party-going, one had better have a light heart to like parties, or to be liked by them. Books nauseate me; I seem to have learnt all that I can learn from books, or else to have lost the power of learning anything from them; and of all these modern writers there is not one who will come boldly up and meet the question which lies the nearest, or ought to lie the nearest, to our hearts. Carlyle! Carlyle only raises questions he cannot answer, and seems best contented if he can make the rest of us as discontented as himself; and all the others, all, that is, who have any power at all, fight beside religion, either as if it were not worth saving, or as if it had nothing to do with them. Every day five columns of the *Times* are full of advertisements of new books, most of them with enough of flashy cleverness to let us endure them through a single reading; but then there is an end of them. A really serious, open-



minded, single-hearted man—there is not one in the whole fraternity; and the impudent presumption of these reviewers, critics and all; well, at any rate, I am flung utterly upon myself, on my own resources, sufficiently miserable ones. My sisters work hard in the parish, if not in the best way, yet with strong enough sense of their duty, and with no lack of industry; they sometimes ask me to join them, but it is in the patronising unpleasant sort of way which reflects upon my helplessness, as if they partly pitied and partly despised me; not that I should care for that; but somehow everything they do is in the formal business style, as if “the poor” were a set of *things* with which something had to be done, instead of human beings with hearts to feel and sufferings to be felt for and souls to be revered;—and so I wander about mostly my own way. I go a good deal among the poor too, but at a distance from here; and there are many pleasant cottages where I am sure of a smile and plenty of affection from the children. This is all very helpless, I know it is; but there is no mending it, it must be. I wait for guidance, and my soul must have it, if I give it time.

M. S.

## LETTER VI.

Oct. 10.

WELL, Arthur, we are come to a crisis now. Here I am at the parting of the ways; I look down one, and I see a bright flowery road, with friends and fortune smiling, and a happy home, and the work I longed for, all which promise to make life delightful: down the other and I see—oh, I will not look down the other; if I do I shall never dare to choose it. Do you not think that sometimes when matters are at the worst with us, when we appear to have done all which we ourselves can do, yet all has been unavailing, and we have only shown we cannot, not we will not, help ourselves; that often just then something comes, almost as if supernaturally, to settle for us, as if our guardian angel took pity on our perplexities, and then at last obtained leave to help us? And if it be so, then what might only be a coincidence becomes a call of Providence, a voice from Heaven, a command. But I am running on as usual with my own feelings, and I have not told you what it is which has happened—after all it is nothing so very great—the bishop has offered my father a living for me; it was done in a most delicate way, and with a high incidental compliment paid to myself. My father, before he spoke to me, had at the first mention of it reminded the bishop I was not yet in orders. The bishop said that in my case it did not matter, from the high character which I had borne at college, and from the way I had distinguished myself

there. I had been spending my time, he had no doubt, to the very best advantage at home ; and he thought it was a good sign in any young man when he took a longer time for study and moral preparation, instead of rushing at once into his profession. It was odd to see how flattered my father was, and how immediately his own opinion of me began to alter when he saw great people disposed to make much of me. He was embarrassed, however, in telling this to me, and he evidently had more doubts how I should take the information than he had liked to tell the bishop. Both the ordinations could be managed within a short time of one another, so there was no escape that way ; my face did not brighten and my father's consequently fell ; I saw he had set his heart upon it. I could not bring myself to mortify him with the peremptory *no*, which my conscience flung upon my lips ; I said I would think about it and give him my answer in two days. In justice to him as well as myself, I felt I could not act any more entirely on my own judgment ; I could not open myself to him, no matter why, I could not . . . . but the next day I rode over to — to talk to the dean, my uncle. I made no mystery of anything with him ; I told him exactly how it was with me, my own difficulties and my embarrassment at home. It relieved me to see how little he was startled, and he was so kind that I could ill forgive myself for having so long shrunk from so warm a mediator. He said he was not at all surprised ; not that he thought there was anything particularly



wrong about myself which should have led me astray, but my case he said was the case of almost all young men of talent before they passed from the school of books into that of life. Of course revelation had a great many most perplexing difficulties about it; but then he said, just as my father said before, I must remember that the real discipline of the mind is *action*, not speculation; and regular activity alone could keep soul or body from disease. To sit still and think was simply fatal; a morbid sensitiveness crept over the feelings like the nervous tenderness of an unhealthy body, and unless I could rouse myself to exertion, there would be no end at all to the disorder of which I complained. It was odd he treated it simply as a disorder, like one of the bodily disorders we have once in our lives to go through, which a few weeks' parish routine and practical acquaintance with mankind would dissipate as a matter of course. I felt I was sinking, but I made another effort: would it not be better, I asked, if I was to make trial first, and take work as a layman under some sensible and experienced rector. He thought not; it would be difficult to find a person with a mind which could influence mine, and it would not do to risk a failure. The really valuable lessons were the lessons we taught ourselves, and as this opportunity had offered, it would be wrong, he fancied, to reject it: my father's feelings ought to weigh with me. Then surely, I said, I ought to tell the bishop, at any rate, something of which I had told him; but my uncle said *no* again. At present, at

least, there was no occasion; *of course* it was all nothing, as my own good sense in a very short time must show me; and though a person in high authority might know things privately without any inconvenience, yet a public or official communication would be an embarrassing challenge upon him to take a part, for which in reality he might be quite sure there was no necessity. Well, I need not tell you what I felt; it was something like a sentence of death, and yet I had determined to abide by his opinion. It seemed at any rate as if the responsibility was not mine, though in my heart I knew it was. I set my teeth and galloped home, and to carry my fate through, and give myself no time to quarrel with it, I went at once to my father and committed myself to an assent. The heartfelt pleasure I saw I was giving him went far to relieve my own heart; at any rate the sacrifice was not for nothing. Life is more than a theory, and love of truth butters no bread: old men who have had to struggle along their way, who know the endless bitterness, the grave moral deterioration which follow an empty exchequer, may well be pardoned for an over-wish to see their sons secured from it; hunger, at least, is a reality, and when I am as old as he is, and have sons of mine to manage for, I shall be quite as anxious I dare say about the "*provision.*" He was delighted, you may be sure he was; we seemed to forget that there had been any coolness or difference between us; in a little while we were talking over my income, the condition the



house was in, and the furniture he was going to provide for me: a good wife was to be a serious advantage to me, and even more ambitious prospects were already beginning to dawn over the horizon; and now here I am dismissed to my own room and my own reflection. What have I done? After all, only what many do under a lower temptation. I have consented for the sake of others, while they do it only for their own; and after all perhaps what my uncle says is true, and by and by I shall find it so; and then one remembers the case of Synesius, who when he was pressed to take a bishopric by the Alexandrian metropolitan, declared he would not teach fables in church unless he might philosophise at home. But Synesius made his conditions and got them accepted; while I . . . Arthur, I cannot cheat myself with sophistry: it is not too late; I ought not, I think I ought not. Oh, curses on this old helpless theological fanaticism which encumbers us with a clumsy panoply of books and doctrines before it will trust us with our duties.

Surely the character of the teacher, his powers, and the culture he has given them, the heart that there is in him, is what should be looked for in a clergyman; not the readiness of servility with which he will plod along under chains, and mutter through the Sunday ritual. I believe in God, not because the Bible tells me that He is, but because my heart tells me so; and the same heart tells me we can only have His peace with us if we love Him and obey Him, and that we can only be happy when we each love our neighbour better than ourselves. This is



what the clergyman's business is to teach: when the Bible says the same, let him use the Bible language. But there are many other things, besides what are in the Bible, which he ought to learn if he would assist the people to do what he tells them to do, if he would really give them rest from that painful vacancy of mind which life spent in routine of never-ending work entails upon them; he should study their work, and the natural laws that are working in it; he should make another version of the Bible for them in what is for ever before their eyes, in the corn-field, in the meadow, in the workshop, at the weaver's loom, in the market-places and the warehouses. Here, better far than in any books, God has written the tables of His commandments; and here, where men's work lies, their teacher should show them how to read them. Let every flower have a second image to their eyes; let him bring in for witness to the love of the great Creator, every bird, every beast, every poorest insect; let the teeming earth tell of Him as in her unwearied labour-pangs she fashions up the material elements into the great rolling flood of life which ebbs and flows around them. They might do something, these clergy, if they would go to work over this ground; labouring in good earnest they would be for the souls of mankind. But they will not do it, and I long to do it; and yet, and yet, Arthur, my conscience shrinks from those melancholy articles. It seems to say I should not trifle with my own soul; and the guilt, if guilt there be, in all the sorrow which may follow on my exclusion, will rest not on me

who shrink from them, but on those who compel submission to them as the price at which we are to be admitted.

But if I decline this living, what is to become of me? I shall finally offend those whose happiness I value far more than I do my own. I shall condemn myself to an inert and self-destroying helplessness. Educated as I have been, there is no profession, except that of an author, which would be tolerable to me; and to be an author, I fear, I fear I have too little talent. The men that write books, Carlyle says, are now the world's priests, the spiritual directors of mankind. No doubt they are; and it shows the folly and madness of trying still to enforce tests, that you do but silence a man in the pulpit, to send his voice along the press into every corner of the land. God abolished tests for all purposes, except of mischief and vexation, when he gave mankind the Printing Press. What is the result of sustaining them, but that we are all at the mercy now of any clever self-assumer? and while our nominal teachers answer no end for us, except the hour's sleep on Sunday, the minds of all of us, from highest lords to enlightened operatives, are formed in reading-rooms, in lecture-rooms, at the bar of public-houses, by all the shrewdest, and often most worthless, novel writers, or paper editors. Yet even this is better than nothing—better than that people should be left to their pulpit teachers, such as they are. Oh! how I wish I could write. I try sometimes; for I seem to feel myself overflowing with thoughts, and I cry out

to be relieved of them. But it is so stiff and miserable when I get anything done. What seemed so clear and liquid, comes out so thick, stupid, and frost-bitten, that I myself, who put the idea there, can hardly find it for shame, if I go look for it a few days after. Still, if there was a chance for me! To be an author—to make my thoughts the law of other minds!—to form a link, however humble, a real living link, in the electric chain which conducts the light of the ages! Oh! how my heart burns at the very hope. How gladly I would bear all the coldness, the abuse, the insults, the poverty, all the ill things which the world ever pays as the wages of authors who do their duty, if I could feel that I was indeed doing my duty so—being of any service so. I should have no difficulty about this living then, Arthur. I should know my work, and I would set about it with all my soul. But to do nothing; to sit with folded hands, and the rust eating into my heart; or, because I cannot do the very best, to lie down and die of despair! Oh! yes; this life of ours is like the deep sea-water, when with bold exertion we may swim securely on the surface, but to rest is to sink and drown. Tell me, Arthur, tell me, what I ought to do.



## LETTER VII.

Oct. 20.

THANK you a thousand times, my dear, dear friend, for your most kind, most wise letter. I will try, as you tell me, to have done with these inane speculations. The world is a mystery; and if the Bible be the account which God has been pleased to give us of it, we may well be content if we find no fewer difficulties in the Bible, as Butler says, than we find in the world. I am no better than the wise and admirable men who have found deepest rest and happiness there, and I think I can do what you say is the least I ought to do—subdue my doubts, if I cannot satisfy them, and try the system which wise men say can only be known in trying. I will taste and see, and perhaps God will be gracious to me. At any rate, believing, as I do, in Providence with all my heart, I cannot doubt that it *has* been the way in which God has chosen to have His people taught; and what am I, that I should dare to fancy that I know better now? I will take it in submission; and as I am to teach with authority, so I will endeavour to learn under authority. At any rate, there can be no doubt what one ought to teach. With the Bible for a text-book, there is no doubt what, in the main, is the drift of its teaching, whatever one may think of parts of it. The best which can be said to individuals to urge them to their duty, is in that book; and we have our conscience, too, and the Bible of universal history too; and, more than all,

experience—the experience of our own hearts—each of which falls in with the great Bible to the moulding of our minds. They do as a fact mould them; they must do it; and therefore it is God's will that they should; so that between them all there is no lack of matter, without breaking debated ground. Well, then, I will try; and if I am wrong, if I am indeed sinning against light, I am at least led astray by no unworthy motive in wishing to do something for God's service, and to spare distress to those who are most dear to me. For the rest—for advancement in the world, for the favour and the smiles of men, for comfort, and ease, and respectability, and position, and those other things for which so many men in these days sell their souls, God is my witness they have not weighed so much in the balance with me, as to put me on my guard against their influence. Oh, no! It were easy to go without all these things; far easier than to bear them. Oh! what a frightful business is this modern society; the race for wealth—*wealth*. I am ashamed to write the word. Wealth means well-being, weal, the opposite of woe. And is that money? or can money buy it? We boast much of the purity of our faith, of the sins of idolatry among the Romanists, and we send missionaries to the poor unenlightened heathens, to bring them out of their darkness into our light, our glorious light; but oh! if you may measure the fearfulness of an idol by the blood which stains its sacrifice, by the multitude of its victims, where in all the world, in the fetish of the poor negro, in the

hideous car of Indian Juggernaut, can you find a monster whose worship is polluted by such enormity as this English one of money! You must pardon me, my heart is bleeding. I have made a resolution which has cost me more than tears, and now it is my best relief to flow out to you at random. Yes, if God adapts His revelation to the capacities of mankind, and the fierceness of His rule over them to the depth of their abasement, then, indeed, there is a cry in heaven for something darker than the darkest discipline of the old idolaters. Riches! I suppose, at the smallest average, for the making of a single rich man, we make a thousand whose life-long is one flood-tide of misery. The charnel-houses of poverty are in the shadow of the palace; and as one is splendid, so is the other dark, poisonous, degraded. How can a man grow rich, except on the spoils of others' labour? His boasted prudence and economy, what is it but the most skilfully availing himself of their necessities, most resolutely closing up his heart against their cries to him for help? In the homes of the poor, Arthur, I have seen—oh! I will not appal your ears with what I have seen—hunger, and vice, and brutal ignorance, and savage rage, in fierce consciousness of what they suffer. Poor wretches struggling home from their day of toil, to find their children waiting for them with a cry for food, when they have none to give, and the famished mothers in broken-hearted despair. Ah, Heaven! and our beautiful account-books, so cleanly written, the



polished persiflage of our white-gloved rulers, and the fair register of the nation's prosperity, what does it look like, up in heaven, in the angel's book, Arthur? No; God has saved me, at least, from that bad service; there is no danger of my falling down before that monster; and the one lasting comfort which is left me now, is that I shall be able to pay back something of my own long debt for my easy life, and use this money they tell me I shall have, to clean my hands against the long account. Well, I will not bore you any more; we cannot get on for ever with nothing but gloom and sulkiness, and I have bothered you enough. It is night and day (or it ought to be) with all of us, if we want to keep in health. To be sure, now and then there will come a North Pole winter, with its six months' frost and darkness and mock suns: but Nature is still fair, and pays them off with their six months of day. I have had my share of the shadow, so I hope I am not going to be cheated. It is marvellous the importance I find I have stepped into. There has been an expedition over to see my house that is to be; and my sisters have settled the drawing-room paper, and the colour of the curtains, and promised to set up my penny club for me. I never told you, by the by, where this said establishment was to be. It is one of the suburbs of Morville, so I shall have a fashionable audience. And I hear there is already a schism at the tea-parties; one side have settled that I am a Puseyite, and another, that that is impossible, because I have such beautiful eyes. My

eccentricities, which used to be my shame, have now become "so interesting." One young lady says Selina will do for me, she is so like me—so enthusiastic; another thinks that a good little plain common-sense, brisk, practical body, is what I want, and so Clara was exactly made for me. My sisters do not particularise names, but one thinks, and the other thinks, and they look knowing, and say, "Well, we shall see." "As long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee;" what a word is there! It is hard, though, that the kind words won't come, when one most wants them. But it is a shame of me to be grumbling now.

My father has prescribed a good body of Anglican divinity. By the by, how coolly we appropriate that word, Arthur. Go into a picture gallery, and ask whose that rosy full-fed face may be, looking out from those rounded and frilled canonicals, and you are told it is Bishop So-and-So, an eminent *divine*; and then one thinks of the Author of the Revelation, the only person, I believe, besides our own Anglicans, who has been thought worthy of that title. Well, any how, I am to have the divinity; though I cannot say that in any one of those worthy writers, except in Butler and in Berkeley, I could ever take much pleasure. But I will try—by and by, not now; I have closed up my books, much to my father's dismay, who is in alarm for my examination. The Bishop has formed a high opinion of me, and should not be disappointed. But, since my degree, I have read almost nothing but church

history, and criticism, and theology, of all sorts, and in all languages; and as I am gorged with it to the full, and as it has but left me where I am, or where I was, it is wiser, perhaps, to leave it. And now that every thing is settled, dear Arthur, write me a nice bright letter. I have a fountain of cold water playing inside my own heart, which all but extinguishes me—don't visit me with any more. It is but smoking, my flax; do not quench it; and when you come to see me, either soon, or in after years, you shall find me—not with six children and a pony carriage, and rosy cheeks, and much anxieties on my turnip crop—not pale with long watchings over folios, nor with oiled hair inditing hymn-books for the pious children of the upper classes—not correcting the press of my last missionary sermon—but, I hope, a happier and a better man than I am now—and always your dear friend, Arthur.

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### LETTER VIII.

Morville, Jan. 1.

WELL, my dear friend, it is over; for good or evil I am committed finally to my calling, and I must abide by it. With three-fourths of what I have undertaken it will be with all my heart—with the remaining fourth—with . . . . .

I do not console myself with the futile foolishness which whispers to me that so many do the



same; for, with such self-contradictory formularies as those to which we bind ourselves, with Articles insisting on our finding one thing in the Bible, and a Liturgy insisting on another, yet the Articles committing themselves to the Liturgy, while notwithstanding they tell us, too, that the Bible is the only rule of faith; it is impossible for any one who has ever thought or read to take them all without straining his conscience one way or another; I dare say this is true; yet what others may have to do is nothing to me: I am only concerned with myself. In theory it is a thorny road enough; but practically it is trodden in by so many sorts that I shall make shift to get along. I was ordained deacon privately a fortnight before Christmas, and priest yesterday—the Sunday after it. Exquisite satire on my state of mind!—I was complimented publicly on my examination, as having shown myself possessed of so much well-digested information, and on being so prudent in avoiding extremes. In spite of my protestations I was chosen to assist in the service yesterday, and I was told privately that I had only to persist in such sensible moderation, and that with my talents, in these trying times, I should be an ornament to the Church, and that its highest places might be open to me. But, above all, my admonition concluded—“Be extreme in nothing—you do not require me to remind you of Aristotle’s caution. Puseyism is the error on one side, German rationalism on the other. Walk steadily in the position which our own admirable

Church has so wisely chosen, equidistant between these two. Throw yourself into her spirit, and, with God's grace, you may rise hereafter to be one of those strong lights which it is her highest honour and her highest witness to have nurtured." I felt so sick, Arthur. So, I may live to be like Burnet, or Tillotson, or Bishop Newton, or Archdeacon Paley—may I die sooner! I had nearly said so; but it was all so kind and so good, and there was such a sort of comfortable dignity about it, that in spite of myself I was awed and affected. Oh why, why, is there no confessional among us—no wise and affectionate friend with a commission to receive our sorrows, and with a *right* to guide us? It is the commission we should have, Arthur; anybody may advise us, but we want some one to order. I dare say the Bishop, if I had spoken out to him, would have been shocked enough, and would have ordered me not to undertake the office; only it would not have been because I thought as I did, but because of the scandal in a candidate for orders saying he thought so. It would have been nothing but a "You must not." He would defend the place against me as an enemy; but of my own soul might become what I could myself make of it; he would have been troubled enough to have known what to do with that. Well, now for my duties (I suppose I may be extreme in them), and the blue chintz curtains, and the Penny Club; and may God guide me!

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A year's interval elapses now between the date of this last letter and of the events to which we must now pass forward. Sutherland was busy, and wrote less frequently than before ; and when they did come, his letters had lost something of that passionate truthfulness of tone which made them so telling even in their weakness. They were mostly of the self-blinded sort, and, as his power was but scanty in that line, they were poor of their kind. It appeared as if he was endeavouring to persuade himself that he was contented and happy ; when it was too clear that all was still wrong with him, that he had but silenced himself, not replied to himself ; and that the wound which, had it continued open, might have made progress towards healing, or, at worst, continued but itself, being now closed over was corrupting inwardly, and the next outbreak might be far worse than the first. No censure shall be passed upon his conduct here ; and the casting of stones shall be left to those who are happy in a purer conscience than I can boast of. Some persons may find it easy and obvious to condemn him ; others may wonder at the foolishness of so much excitement over such a very trifle, and regard such excessive sensibility as a kind of moral disease. But I, who was his friend, am unequal to either, and consider myself happy in having but to tell the story as it was ; to relate the facts as they grew into their consequences ; the judgment which Providence passed upon him—on the whole, perhaps, a judgment as just as that Power's judgments usually are found to



be. We had kept our misgivings to ourselves ; but from the first we had felt all of us a painful conviction that Sutherland's was not a mind to compose itself as he proposed and expected ; and that the ideas which were disturbing him were of a kind which would grow ; whatever his own will liked to say about it. Again, his occupation was sure to prove less agreeable than he hoped to find it. To be enthusiastic about doing much with human nature is a foolish business indeed ; and, throwing himself into his work as he was doing, and expecting so much from it, would not the tide ebb as strongly as it was flowing ? It is a rash game this setting our hearts on any future beyond what we have our own selves control over. Things do not walk as we settle with ourselves they ought to walk, and to hope is almost the correlative of to be disappointed. Moreover, for the practical work of this world (and a parson's work is no exception), a thinking man is far more likely to require the support of a creed to begin with, than to find the quarry in his work out of which he can sculpture one. Let his uncle the dean say what he pleased, it is no such easy matter after all to believe that all the poor unhappy beings we have left to rot in ignorance and animalism, with minds scarcely so well cultivated as the instinct of a well-trained brute ; that the fashionable loungers of the higher classes, and the light, good-tempered, gossip-dealing, ball-going young ladies, have really and truly immortal souls, which God came down from heaven to re-

deem, and for which He and the Devil are contending. It is easy to talk largely of the abstract dignity of humanity, and to take Socrates or Shakespeare for a type of it. One can understand something of spirits such as theirs continuing, because we see they do continue; but really, with the mass of us, one would think the most reasonable as well as the kindest thing which could be done would be to put us out. The stars want no snuffing; but I fear, if we are all to be kept burning, whoever has the trimming of us will have work enough. Neither good enough for heaven, nor bad enough for the other place, we oscillate in the temperate inertia of folly; answering no end whatever either of God or Devil; surely, one would think, we should be put out.

At any rate, for this unfortunate normal state of the mass of mankind, Markham was not calculating; he was, he thought, to be teaching men to love good and hate evil, and hardly any one of those he came in contact with would have power really to do either one or the other. Love and hate of such matters are intellectual passions, with whose names we must not dignify the commonplace selfishnesses or respectabilities of common people, who may like and may dislike, but cannot love and cannot hate. He fancied he was going to make the lot of poverty more tolerable: as far as giving away money went, no doubt he succeeded; but it was unlucky for him that his parish lay on the outskirts of a large town. His poor were the operative poor, whose

senses were too keenly quickened to let them sink into contentment, while they lived side by side with luxury which they knew was trampling them under foot while it was feeding itself upon their life juices; living, as they were, for the most part in filth and vice, yet without that torpor of faculty which helps the agricultural poor through their sufferings; without the sense of home either which these have, or of the feudalism which secures the most ill-deserving landlord something of their respect and of their hearts. It was ill-dealing for Markham with such as they; he was one of the hated order. They would take his money with a kind of sullen thanks, as if they knew very well they were but receiving a small instalment of their own rights; but it was impossible to make them learn from him; and their hard stern questions often wrung from him the bitter self-confession, that the doctrinal food which the Church had to offer to men of stamp like that was but like watered chaff for the giant dray-horse of the coal-yard. He could have more easily touched them if he had spoken out what once had been his own feelings; but he had consented to be a declaiming instrument. He could only speak now—not as man to man, but as thing to thing; and when he found a man who would speak his own old doubts to him, he discovered that he had not been rewarded for his submission with any enlightenment to answer them.



## LETTER IX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

SOMETHING very uncomfortable has befallen me: a fool can fire a powder magazine as well as the wisest of us; and in spite of the mournful absurdity which hangs about the story, I cannot tell in what disaster it may not conclude. However, I will not anticipate; you shall have it all *ab initio*. You know, in all large towns, there are those very detestable things, religious tea-parties. In this place, where there are such a number of business people, who have either retired from business themselves, or have withdrawn their families out of its atmosphere to make idle ladies and gentlemen of them, they are particularly rife; all people want some excitement, and as they are in too uneasy a position in this world, and common ordinary intercourse with one another is too vulgar to suit their ambition, they flit about in the shadow of the other world; and with wax lights, and psalm singing, and edifying conversation, entertain one another with evening soirées, in imitation, as they fancy, of the angels. I hate these things, and as I have never cared to avoid saying so, I have of course made myself innumerable enemies, partly because I ought to be shining among them as the central figure, and partly for the reason I have given for my dislike. I fear the main element of angel tea-parties is seldom there. These people can really have very little love for one another from the

delight with which they mourn over each other's failings; and when, unhappily, no such topic has newly presented itself, the edifying talk consists in the showing up of the poor Puseyites; or, if the party happen to be Puseyite, in the sort of self-satisfied sham business-like we-are-the-wise assumption, which is even more intolerable. I suppose the angels do not stimulate the monotony of their lives by half-envious stories of the unlawful words or unlawful enjoyments of the other place, do they Arthur? Well, my place on the occasion has been commonly supplied by the town curates and rectors, who have done the honours, no doubt, far better than I could do them; and I was contented to let it be so, and think no more about the matter. But it seems I must have made myself the occasion of a great deal of talk. I didn't marry any of them—that was the first great sin. I patronised no societies, and I threw cold water on philanthropy schemes. The clergy! I hope it is not wrong of me, but I cannot like them. Though I have not avoided their acquaintance, we have never got on; and after one or two ineffectual attempts, we have tacitly given up all hopes of intimacy. I never saw the clouds gathering. The Bishop cautioned me against party, and here it has been my sin that I am of none. What is not understood is suspected; and, what is worse, it is for ever talked about. It is one of the oddest of men's infirmities, that no talk of what they do understand, is spicy enough to interest them. Well, never mind, I must

tell my story. About a fortnight ago I was asked to dine with the Hickmans. They are one of the few families that I really like here. Miss Hickman and I often meet in the dark staircases and the back alleys; and, though the least trifle in the world given to cant, they have enough good sense and active conscience about them to be saved from any serious harm from it. I had often been there before, and yet I felt a strange reluctance on this unhappy evening. I think there is a spiritual scent in us which feels mischief coming, as they say birds scent storms. I felt somewhat assured on entering the drawing-room. I was the last; and of the six or seven people present, there was only one I did not know at all, and one more with whom I was not intimate—this last, a young lady, a Miss Lennox, a niece of Mrs. Hickman, who had been for some weeks staying with them. The other was the newly-arrived rector of a parish in the neighbourhood, who, I understood, had brought with him a reputation of cleverness, and was shortly to be married to the young lady. No one was coming in the evening: alas! who could have guessed from the plain unthreatening surface of that quiet little assembly, what a cunning mine had been run below it,—that I had been brought there to be dragged into an argumentary examination in which this new-found chymist was to analyse me, to expose my structure for his betrothed's spiritual pleasure, his own vanity, and the parish scandal. Well, unsuspecting, I went on tolerably well for some time: I rather liked the



fellow. He was acute, not unwitty, and with a *savoir faire* about him which made his talk a pleasing variety to me. Once or twice the ladies made serious remarks; but he, as well as I, appeared to shrink from mixing more religion with our dinner than the grace which went before and which succeeded it; and in the half-hour we were left together after the ladies were gone, there was nothing to make me change my mind about him, except that I felt I could never be his friend; he knew too much and felt too little.

In the evening the conversation turned on a projected meeting of the Bible Society, where they were all going. There was much talk—what such talk is you know. Nothing at first was directly addressed to me, so I took no part in it. The good rector came out with really some tolerably eloquent discoursing; and the poor ladies drank up his words; oh, you should have seen them. I fancy the fair *fiancée* drank a little too much of them, and got rather spiritually intoxicated—at least I hope she did—as some excuse for her. As he went rolling on for an hour or more, he described the world as grinding between the nether millstone of Popery and the upper millstone of Infidelity, and yet a universal millennium was very near indeed through this Bible activity. At the end he turned sharp upon me. Of course Mr. Sutherland would feel it his duty to take the chair on so truly blessed an occasion?

Now, conceive societies, with chairmen, dragging at the poor world from between two such millstones!!

“I believe you need not ask Mr. Sutherland,” the young lady said, in a tone of satiric melancholy: “he never preaches the Bible.”

I didn't laugh. I was very near it; but I luckily looked first at Mrs. Hickman, and saw her looking so bitterly distressed—and distressed, too, (how much a look can say!) from her partly sharing her niece's feeling, that I gathered up as much gravity as I could command. “I believe I read it to you twice every day,” I said, “and my sermons are a great deal better than my own practice, perhaps than the practice of most of us.” She coloured, because she thinks daily service formal and superstitious. I do not know what indignation would not have bubbled out of her lips, when the rector heroically flew in to the rescue, and with sufficient tact only noticed her with a smile, and repeated his own question.

“I fear not,” I said. “I shrink from meetings where a number of people are brought together, not to learn something which they are themselves to do, but to give money to help others in a remote employment. There is a great deal of talking and excitement, and they go away home fancying they have been doing great things, when they have, in fact, only been stirring up some unprofitable feeling, and giving away a few shillings or pounds, when all their active feeling and all the money they can spare is far more properly required at home. Charity is from person to person; and it loses half, far more than half, its moral value when

the giver is not brought into personal relation with those to whom he gives."

"Mr. Sutherland is general enough, and perhaps vague enough," was the answer. "Permit me to keep to my subject. The Bible Society in the course of each year disperses over the world hundreds of thousands of Bibles in many different languages. The Word of God is sent into lands of Egyptian darkness, and souls at least may come to saving knowledge who else were lost without hope."

I said coldly, I was sorry. I found my own duties far beyond my powers both of mind and money. I had only expressed my own feelings to explain my own conduct. I passed no opinion about others.

"I fear you cannot defend yourself on so general a ground without reflecting upon others, Mr. Sutherland," he said. "I could understand you, in a manner sympathise with you, if you took the ground of objection so many good churchmen take, in declining to act with a mixed body; but in this case, I fear, pardon me, I think you have some other reason. I do not fancy the objects of the society can entirely meet your approbation, or you would not have spoken so coldly."

Miss Lennox was looking infinitely disagreeable; the Hickmans as much concerned. The vulgar impertinence of such offensive personality disgusted me out of temper. Partly, too, I was annoyed at feeling he had heard, or she had been cunning enough to



see, I had some particular feeling on the point beyond what I had spoken out.

“Yes,” I said, “it is true I have particular feelings. I dislike societies generally; I would join in none of them. For your society in particular, as you insist on my telling you, I think it is the very worst, with the establishment of which I have been acquainted. Considering all the heresies, the enormous crimes, the wickednesses, the astounding follies which the Bible has been made to justify, and which its indiscriminate reading has suggested; considering that it has been, indeed, the sword which our Lord said that he was sending; that not the Devil himself could have invented an implement more potent to fill the hated world with lies, and blood, and fury; I think, certainly, that to send hawkers over the world loaded with copies of this book, scattering it in all places among all persons—not teaching them to understand it; not standing, like Moses, between that heavenly light and them; but cramming it into their own hands as God’s book, which He wrote, and they are to read, each for himself, and learn what they can for themselves—is the most culpable folly of which it is possible for man to be guilty.”

I had hardly spoken before I felt how wrong, how foolish, I had been; and that a mere vulgar charlatan, as I felt the man was, should have had the power to provoke me so! I had said nothing which was not perfectly true, in fact; but I ought to have known it was not true to the ignorant women who were listening with eyes fixed and ears quivering, as

if the earth was to open and swallow a blasphemer—What did they know of the world's melancholy history?

I saw Mr. ——'s eyes sparkle as he felt the triumph I was giving him, and his next word showed me it had been a preconcerted plan.

"It is as I told you," he said, turning away from me; "the enemy is among us." The ladies gathered together for mutual protection in a corner.

"What do you mean, Sir?" I said; "this is most unwarrantable language. With what purpose did you come here?"

"Language! Sir," he sighed, "unwarrantable!—I might ask you, Sir, what you mean—with what purpose you are come a wolf among these sheep? They know you now, Mr. Sutherland. I knew what you were before, but your disguise had been too cunning for their eyes."

Mrs. Hickman looked the picture of despair; quite wretched enough to disarm any anger I might feel at her.

"Really, Madam," I said, rising, "if you have connived at this scene, you must be sufficiently punished at its results. I will not add to your pain by continuing my presence." The miserable young lady was flushed with exultation; the rector had smoothed himself into an expression of meek triumph in a successful exorcism. I had been too much in the wrong myself to enable me to say *then* what might have to be said. I would wait till the next morning, which I supposed must bring my

hostess's apology, and so bowed coldly and departed. The whole thing was so very insufferably bad that I could not even let myself think of what I was to do till I had considered it coolly. I went home and went to bed. The next morning came, but no note, and the day passed without any; and I began to feel, as a clergyman, in a most embarrassing position indeed. As a man, it was far too contemptible to affect me; but as I thought it over, I saw that it was a seriously concerted design, whether from dislike or suspicion—what I do not know—to attack my position, and I had not heard the end of it. I called once or twice at the Hickmans, but they were not at home to me; long faces began to show about the parish. It was evident tongues had been busy, and last Sunday the church was half empty. I was at a loss what to resolve upon, and had been thinking over various plans, when something came this evening which is likely to resolve it all for me and save me the trouble. My folly has bred its consequence; the word flies out and has a life of its own, and goes its own way and does its own work. Just now a note was brought me, a very kind one, from the Bishop, requesting me to take an early opportunity of calling on him: if I were not engaged, fixing to-morrow morning. The sooner down the better with all nasty medicine, from the first magnesia draught to the death finish. I shall present myself at the first moment. I can have no doubt of the occasion.



## LETTER X.

WELL, it is over, this interview; and a great deal else is over, I believe. He is a good man, a really good man, and a great one. Would to God I had been open with him before! however, it is idle lamenting now. You shall hear: I found him alone of course; I was shown into his study; he was good enough to remember that the moments we are kept waiting for such interviews are not the very sweetest, and he joined me almost immediately. There was a grave kindness in his manner, which told me at once I had been right in looking for unpleasantness, and his good sense kept him from hanging on the edge of what was inevitable. He said he was very sorry, &c., and that I was not to regard what he was going to say to me as in the least official; whether anything of that kind might have to follow, would depend very much on what he heard from me. In the mean time he wished to speak to me, as a friend, on some very serious matter which had been communicated to him. I bowed. He said he concluded from my manner that I was prepared for what was coming; and then he went on, that I was said to have used certain very incautious language, to say the least of it, at a private party in my parish, on the subject of the Bible Society. Perhaps in itself it was not a thing which he could formally notice. With the society in question he had as little sympathy as I could have; and he could easily under-

stand that a young man of strong feelings might have been led to express himself with an unwise vehemence. But I must be aware how strongly inclined foolish people were to misunderstand and misrepresent, and how extremely cautious in my position I was bound to be. He stopped there ; so, as well as I could, I thanked him for his kindness. I said I knew I had been very unwise, and, as nearly as I could remember them, I repeated the exact words which I had used. He answered very truly, with a sort of a smile, that words like those, unexplained, were quite as dangerous as anything I could find in the subject of them. But then, he went on, that this was not all he had to say to me. There was another matter, and a more serious one, he was sorry to tell me, of which he hoped I could give explanation. I had now been a year at my parish, and on all, except on one point, he was happy to tell me that if I had not exactly pleased my people, it was their fault, not mine. But a very serious complaint had been made to him on the nature of my sermons. He need not go into detail ; but he had been informed generally that during that entire season I had not preached a single one which might not have been a Socinian's. He did not charge me with having taught Socinianism ; on the contrary (and perhaps, as a general rule, I had done wisely), I had steadily avoided all doctrine ; but that I had not said a word to prove that I held opinions which Socinians did not hold, on the points on which they differed from us ; neither on the incarnation nor on

the atonement, as such, had I ever directly spoken. I was silent. "I presume it is true," he continued, "and from your present manner, that it has been purposely so." "Yes," I said. He waited for me to go on. "If the Catholic doctrine be true," I said; he started; "if the Catholic doctrine be true," I repeated, "it is so overwhelming a mystery, that I cannot think of it without its crushing me. I cannot bring myself to speak in public of it, before such a mixed assembly, or lend myself to the impiety (I can use no other word) with which the holiest secret of our faith is made common and profane. I think there is no one in my parish to whom, even in private, I should feel it possible to speak upon it."

"Then you have not spoken in private either?"

"I have never been sought. If I had, however, I should probably have been still silent."

"You said *if* the Catholic doctrine be true—you observed that I remarked your words, and you desired that I should do so, from your repeating them. Am I to suppose that you have any doubts about it?"

"My lord," I said, "you were good enough to tell me you were speaking to me as a friend, and I will show you my thanks by being entirely open with you. Many times I have been on the point of volunteering a confession to you; I have only been withheld by an unmanly fear; a doubt of how you might receive it. However, I will speak now. I owe my situation to your goodness, and perhaps I have hitherto made a bad return to you. Now I



put myself without reserve in your hands, and whatever you think I ought to do, I will do. Never, either by word or action, until this *if*, have I given reason to living man to suppose I did question it. But that in these times every serious person should not in his heart have felt some difficulty with the doctrines of the incarnation, I cannot believe. We are not as we were. When Christianity was first published, the *imagination* of mankind presented the relation of heaven to earth very differently from what it does now. When heaven was one place, and earth was another, imaginatively co-extensive, extended under it—with, in every nation, a belief in a constant intercourse between them, shadowing itself out in legends of God's appearing upon earth, and mortals elevated among gods—it cannot but have seemed far simpler than that this earth should have been the scene of a mystery so tremendous, than it can now seem to us, knowing what we know of this little earth's infinite insignificance. But as this is but an imaginative difficulty, so it has not been on this, but rather on the moral side of the doctrine, that I have found my own deepest perplexity. I will be candid. I believe God is a just God, rewarding and punishing us exactly as we act well or ill. I believe that such reward and punishment follow necessarily from His will as revealed in natural law, as well as in the Bible. I believe that as the highest justice is the highest mercy, so He is a merciful God. That the guilty should suffer the measure of penalty which their guilt has incurred, is justice. What we call

mercy is not the remission of this, but rather the remission of the extremity of the sentence attached to the act, when we find something in the nature of the causes which led to the act, which lightens the moral guilt of the agent. That each should have his exact due is *just*—is the best for himself. That the consequence of his guilt should be transferred from him to one who is innocent (although that innocent one be himself willing to accept it), whatever else it be, is not *justice*. We are mocking the word when we call it such. If I am to use the word *justice* in any sense at all which human feeling attaches to it, then to permit such transfer is but infinitely deepening the wrong, and seconding the first fault by greater *injustice*. I am speaking only of the doctrine of the atonement in its human aspect, and as we are to learn anything from it of the divine nature or of human duty. To suppose that by our disobedience we have taken something away from God, in the loss of which He suffers, for which He requires satisfaction, and that this satisfaction has been made to Him by the cross sacrifice (as if doing wrong were incurring a debt to Him, which somehow must be paid, though it matters not by whom), is so infinitely derogatory to His majesty, to every idea which I can form of His nature, that to believe it in any such sense as this confounds and overwhelms me. In the strength of my own soul, for myself, at least, I would say boldly, rather let me bear the consequences of my own acts myself, even if it be eternal vengeance, and God requires it,

than allow the shadow of my sin to fall upon the innocent."

I stopped. He said, quietly, "You have more to say, go on."

I continued. "I know that in early ages men did form degraded notions of the Almighty, painting Him like themselves, extreme only in all their passions: they thought He could be as lightly irritated as themselves, and that they could appease His anger by wretched offerings of innocent animals. From such a feeling as this to the sense of the value of a holy and spotless life and death—from the sacrifice of an animal to that of a saint—is a step forward out of superstition quite immeasurable. That between the earnest conviction of partial sight, and the strong metaphors of vehement minds, the sacrificial language should have been transferred onwards from one to the other, seems natural to me; perhaps inevitable. On the other hand, through all history we find the bitter fact that mankind can only be persuaded to accept the best gifts which Heaven sends them, in persecuting and destroying those who are charged to be their bearers. Poetry and romance shadow out the same truth as the stern and mournful rule under which Heaven is pleased to hold us, that men must pay their best to it as the price of what they receive. I understand this—I can understand, as I can conceive, that as the minds of men grew out into larger mould, these two ideas united into one, in such a doctrine as that which we are now taught to hold.



“But if I am to believe that in plain prose it is true as a single fact—not which happens always, but which has happened once for all—that before the world was made it was predetermined so, and we must obey the Bible, and allow that this is justice and this is mercy; then in awe and perplexity I turn away from the Bible, not knowing, if it use our words in a sense so different, so utterly different, from any which we attach to them, what may not be the mystical meaning of any or every verse and fragment of it. It has but employed the words which men use to mock and deceive them. A revelation! Oh, no! no revelation; only rendering the hard life-enigma tenfold harder. I thank you very much for bearing with me. I will but say, in conclusion, that I do not disbelieve that in some mysterious transcendental sense, as involved in the system of the entire universe, with so vast an arc that no faculty of man can apprehend its curve, that in some such sense the Catholic doctrine of the atonement may be true. But a doctrine out of which, with our reason, our feeling, our logic, I at least can gather any practical instruction for mankind—any deeper appreciation of the attributes of God, any deeper love for Him, any stimulant towards our own obedience—such a doctrine I cannot find it. I bury what I am to think of it in the deepest corner of my own heart, where myself I fear to look.”

It was said and over. And oh! what a relief I felt. A weight which had been sinking me to the

earth was taken off. I was an honest man again, with nothing more to conceal, and follow now what might, I had done my duty, and I was not responsible.

He said my convictions seemed deeply thought—were they altogether new? formed since the time of my taking orders?

I said I would be frank with him again. I had had very great difficulty in taking orders. At that time my feelings were far less defined than they were at present; but even then I had anxiously desired an explanation with him, and it had only been the advice of others, (which I had never sufficiently regretted having followed,) which had deterred me. I was told, and I partly believed it, that my uncomfortable feelings were the result of want of employment, of my mind being so entirely flung in upon itself; that they were but symptoms of a disease which required only exercise for its cure. I determined, for myself, that I would submit absolutely, in all I said and did; in no way hint a doubt even to myself; and, in, I believe, a spirit of real humility, I did endeavour with all my heart to see the truth as the Church sees it. It had pleased God to govern my mind in His way, not in mine. I had bitterly repented my orders, for I felt my uneasiness not pass away, but deepen into conviction. I was now more grateful for this opportunity which he had given me of speaking out, than any words could tell him. I had not come prepared to make so full a confession; but I had been forced on by an impulse which I could not, if I had wished,

control. And now I threw myself on his hands, to do with me as he thought right.

He said nothing for some time. He sat silent. His thoughts appeared to have left me, and travelled off on some abstracted interest. I had no more to speak. I did not interrupt him. After perhaps a quarter of an hour, he seemed to make an effort to collect himself, and said sharply, "Of course I have but one duty." But the tone showed it was to himself he was speaking, not to me. Presently he turned to me, and said with a voice of mournful kindness, "May God help you, my son! It is a terrible trial. Only He who is pleased to send such temptation can give you strength to bear it. You shall have my prayers . . . and my blessing . . . not as your bishop, Markham. I cannot bless you as your bishop. But as an old man and an old friend, who can still love you and feel for you, yes, such a blessing you shall not want, my poor, poor boy." There were tears in his eyes. I was prepared for anything but this; for my rebuke, for any harshness. I could not contain myself. I burst into tears too. I caught his hand and kissed it. He did not take it from me; but his eyes were seeking heaven and God, and his lips were fast moving. Was it for me, was it for himself, that he was praying? I knew not, I might not, I would not, hear. But his overflowing heart poured out its secrets. Broken words fell in upon my ears which I could not choose but catch. He was praying to be taken away from the evil day, that last dreadful time of terror, when the Devil



should have the power for a season over hearts not sealed with the Devil's mark, when even the elect would be tempted to deny their Lord.

Well I cannot tell you more of this, how kind he was, how much I was overcome. He thanked me for my candour, as he called it, while he allowed how bitterly it distressed—it embarrassed him: once there was a passionate burst. “You, too, of whom I had heard so much, and formed so many hopes . . . I knew more of you than you supposed, and sympathised more with you; yours is a mind of no common order, and I had looked, yes I had looked to you, I had hoped that you, with a knowledge of the power of that spirit of antichrist which is now working in this world, so different from anything which we knew, or now at our age can ever learn, that you might have been a chosen champion of the Church. God's will be done—and our duty; of course I cannot (I would not if I could) take any public steps in consequence of what you have disclosed to me; and I am sure you yourself are too high-minded to take advantage of your situation or mine; what I advise you, you will do. You cannot remain where you are; give your mind time, and try other scenes; go travel, see what men are; see what all men are or must become who allow their faith to glide out of their hearts, as you have allowed yours; and you may yet by God's grace. . . . I cannot tell—I have little hopes, they have all gone; yes, there is not one, not one in all these many years which I have seen upon the earth, not one man of more than common power who

has been contented to abide in the old ways." He was half speaking to himself, half to me. He took down a book from his shelves; it was the confession of the Vicar of Savoy; he saw I knew it. "This does not content you," he said; "you cannot—you are too honest far, to take his terms for yours, and continue on in your position as he held on in his. No! you will go; I will find some one to supply your place in your absence, and you will be generous in what you will leave him. If at the end of three years your mind is not changed, I think you will leave the service for ever which is not yours, and you will not shrink from what you will lose by it."

I answered at once my benefice was in his hands; what changes my mind might pass through I could not tell; but that if—if I ever came to feel that I had been walking in a delirious dream, and that the old way was the true way, it would be with far too deep humiliation to permit me ever again to dare to become its minister. A few words, he did not mean of common-place advice, against over haste, against imprudence, was all the weak opposition which he made to this. My living is resigned—my employment gone. I am again free—again happy; and all the poor and paltry net-work in which I was entangled, the weak intrigues which like the flies in the summer irritate far worse than more serious evils, I have escaped them all; and if the kind good people who have brought all this about, can find any miserable pleasure in what they will suppose their victory; each one of the thousand pluming himself or

herself on the real secret—the exact story—the only true, full, perfect and sufficient account of Mr. Sutherland's disgrace, let them have it, I can afford it; they gain their pleasure, I do but lose, what perhaps it is our best credit to be without, the world's good opinion. All I really grieve for is my father. He, they, all of them, will never forgive me; the old feelings, or far worse than the old, will flow back now into the old channel, and my small measure of affection will turn sour in the thunder storm, and curdle into contempt. It must be so, I shall go away and they will forget me when they do not see me. Perhaps if I live beyond their eyes, and my vexing presence is not by to irritate, I may be at least endured—tolerated . . . . . and in after years when what now they most value has proved its hollowness; when the world passes by them and through them, and they learn at last that they cannot take it with them, cannot gain from it one kind smile they do not pay for; that the world with all its power, splendour, caresses, promises, for all the love we waste upon it, cannot love us, for it is heartless; perhaps then . . . . . But I will not dwell upon so melancholy a picture.

M.

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It is an easy way to get rid of the difficulties of this world, to say, in the off-hand way in which it is commonly said, that if a man cannot get along with it, it is all his own fault; that the world is a looking-glass which gives every man his own image;



that he has no one to blame but himself; that he is not active enough; that he is not sensible enough; not enough of any thing that he should be, and too much of every thing he should not be; that he expects what he cannot find, and does not choose to be contented with what he can; anyhow to shift the responsibility of his failure off Nature's shoulders upon his own. And yet I think Nature, if she interests herself much about her children, must often feel that, like the miserable Frankenstein, with her experimenting among the elements of humanity, she has brought beings into existence who have no business here; who can do none of her work, and endure none of her favours; whose life is only suffering; and whose action is one long protest against the ill foresight which flung them into consciousness.

I cannot understand why the worst sentence which could be pronounced against the worst man that ever lived, should be nothing more than that it were better for him if he had never been born. Surely it were better for half mankind if they had never been born, considering the use they make of themselves; and then the stage would be left clear for the other half, and both sides would be such infinite gainers. The vicious, the foolish, and the passionate, would escape a service which is torture to them; and the others would be spared the nuisance of such disagreeable companionship. There is already a fear the earth is growing overpeopled, and this matter might really be taken into consideration.

*Μηδὲν ἀγὰν* should be the maxim, and, in future, no colonists should be sent into this world who have too much or too little of any thing.

The class of persons who get on best here, who understand nature, and whom nature understands, are the good sort of prudent people, who push their way along the beaten track, neither loving very strongly, nor loved very strongly. Allowing the heart to have a voice when it does not plead against understanding, they do not exactly love their neighbours, but they keep on broad terms of reasonable good-will with them; liking such as do not stand painfully in their way, and sympathising as far as they can feel sympathy with all sensible persons like themselves. They form their attachments, conubial and otherwise, for mutual convenience and comfort; and in the routine of profitable occupation, intermittent like night and day with their hours of pleasant relaxation, they pass through their seventy years with no rest disturbed by any more painful emotion than what might arise from an infirm digestion, or a doubtful pecuniary speculation. They love, they fear, they hope, they pray, they fulfil all their duties to earth and heaven on the broad principles of moral economy; and having walked as the world judges them with unblemished integrity, and lived prudently within their incomes, money income and soul income, and never permitted themselves in extravagance in either, they entertain well-grounded hopes of continued prosperity beyond the grave. And most likely they will find them



realised; they have the monopoly of this world's good—they form the world's law and the world's opinions, as the favourites and the exponents of the will of the higher Powers; and “coming in no misfortune like other folk, neither being plagued like other men,” wherever they are they will be still themselves; and carrying with them the elements of their prosperity in their own moderation, it is difficult to conceive a state of being in which they could be less happy than they are.

Why need any other sort be compelled into existence, besides these? What use are fools? What use are bad people? What use are dreamers and enthusiasts? Surely it cannot be necessary to have them as foils to the excellence of the others, and to indulge these in Pharisaic self-laudations that they are not as the publicans. I know that a holy father of the Church defines one mode of the happiness of the blessed to be the contemplation of the torments of the damned; and I know that those who succeed in life do now and then make pleasant comparisons of themselves with their less fortunate neighbours: but one would hope, if they were asked, they would not say it was essential to them; and, unless it be, it is a large price to pay for what could be dispensed with. I should be sorry to think there was so much favouritism in Providential government; and I would sooner believe there is some impracticable necessity in the nature of things than accept the holy father's definition, and allow him to have seen clearly into



the conditions of happiness either upon earth or in heaven.

Yet, whatever be the cause why things are as they are, still to be conscious of nothing is better than to be conscious only of pain; and to do nothing than to do what entails pain. So that whether this earth be all, and this little life-spark of existence flicker but its small time and then expire for ever; or whether there be, as we are taught and we believe, some mysterious fuel which will still feed it through the silence of eternity; doubtless it would be better for half of us never to have been at all. *Les méchants*, Jean Jacques says, *sont très embarrassants*, both in this world and in the next; and if we are compelled to doubt so much what just destination to assign to the wicked, infinitely harder it is to know what to do with natures which fail from excess of what we must call rather a kind of good than of evil, and from a delicacy of sensitive organization, to which their moral energy of character bears too small proportion; men who are unable to escape from themselves into healthy activity; because they want the strength to carve out their own independent road, and the beaten roads offend their sensibility; and are therefore engaged their lives long in a hopeless struggle with elements too strong for them; falling down from failure to failure, and either yielding at last and surrendering their souls to what they despise, or else lying down to die of despair over a barren past and a future without a prospect.

Whether it was a misfortune to himself or to the world that Markham Sutherland was born into it; beyond question it was a very great misfortune both to himself and to his family that his lot was cast among them. Upright and conscientious, their tempers, as we have partly seen, were of the broad, solid, sturdy kind; which, as they never know the meaning of a refined difficulty, so never experience any which it is not easy for them to overcome.

He was quite right in his anticipation of the way in which this last break-down would be received; they did not mean to be unkind, but as it was clear the success by which they were accustomed to measure their fellow creatures now never could be his, and as he was the only one of a large family who had failed to find it, their minds being all constructed on a common type, to which his formed the only exception, their affections circulated round and round among themselves, and he lay outside the circle which was complete without him. You cannot reason people into loving those whom they are not drawn to love; they cannot reason themselves into it; and there are some contrarieties of temper which are too strong even for the obligations of relationship. Unhappily, too, they let themselves despise Markham, and where the baneful glance of contempt has once fallen, love is for ever banished. The feeling was not returned, although, perhaps, it might as deservedly have been so. Markham still saw much in them to love; still struggled, perhaps, to make up their short-comings by his own fulness.



His mind was wider than theirs, little as they thought it was; and he could understand and make allowance for the unkindness which was wounding him, while they could make none for his disappointing their hopes, and being so unlike themselves. Well, he was quite wise in deciding to keep away from them. It would have been better, perhaps, if he had gone at once abroad; but he was anxious, he told me, to spend some time at least in severer study than hitherto he had been able to pursue, and try if he could not calm his mind, instead of drowning it in the excitement of motion. He was going to try what philosophy would do for him, and at least for a time it appeared to answer. "One of two things one must have," he wrote to me, "either sufficient respect for oneself to take whatever comes, *æquo animo*, even it be what is called damnation, I mean so great an honouring of oneself, or confidence in oneself, that nothing external can affect one —, or else, sufficient faith in an all-powerful, external Being, of qualities which ensure His preserving us on both sides of the grave. It is a question, I think, whether we can have both; but, though we may go without houses, carpets, horses, carriages, one of these two we cannot go without, under penalty of madness or suicide, or, the common fate of mankind, of becoming machines for the decomposing of dinners." He proposed the question fairly to himself; it remained to be seen what he would make of it. I confess I had serious misgivings. I am not going to follow his pilgrimage



along the road with any detail; externally his life had now, for the next year, little variety, and a few specimens of the thoughts he left behind him will be enough to indicate the direction, and generally the sort of view of nature, of the world, of human life, and its conditions, which are likely to be the goal of men who go astray from the old way as he went.

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Why is it thought so very wicked to be an unbeliever? Rather, why is it assumed that no one can have difficulties unless he be wicked? Because an anathema upon unbelief has been appended as a guardian of the creed. It is one way, and doubtless a very politic way, of maintaining the creed, this of anathema. When everything may be lost unless one holds a particular belief, and nothing except vulgar love of truth can induce one into questioning it, common prudence points out the safe course; but really it is but a vulgar evidence, this of anathema.

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Genuine belief ended with persecution. As soon as it was felt that to punish a man for maintaining an independent opinion was shocking and unjust, so soon a doubt had entered whether the faith established was unquestionably true. The theory of persecution is complete. If it be necessary for the existence of society to put a man to death who has a monomania for murdering bodies, or to exile him

for stealing what supports them; infinitely more necessary is it to put to death, or send into exile, or to imprison those whom we know to be destroying weak men's souls, or stealing from them the dearest of all treasures. It is because—whatever we choose to say—it is because *we do not know, we are not sure* they are doing all this mischief; and we shrink from the responsibility of acting upon a doubt.

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Sometimes it is a spot of sunlight travelling over a dark ground—sometimes it is the black shadow of a single cloud, the one speck in the great ocean of light; one wonders which, after all, human life is.

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Where was ever the teacher who has not felt, at least, if not said, “No man cometh to the Father except through me?”

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The end of all culture is, that we may be able to sustain ourselves in a spiritual atmosphere as the birds do in the air. This is what philosophy teaches. Men sustained by religion, take a creed for a substitute, and hang, or believe that they are hanging, suspended by a golden chain from the throne of God. It is happy for mankind that they are able to do this. For mankind—not for philosophers. I confess it sickens me to see our philosophic savans, as they call themselves, swinging in this way mid-air among the precipices of life, examining

a flower here, a rock there; analysing them and cutting them in pieces, and discovering the combination of elements which went to their making, and calling this *wisdom*. What is man the wiser or the happier for knowing how the air-plants feed, or how many centuries the flint-stone was in forming, unless the knowledge of them can be linked on to humanity, and elucidate for us some of our hard moral mysteries.

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In Christianity, as in every thing else which men have thrown out of themselves, there is the strangest mixture of what is most noble with what is most . . . . . I shrink from the only word. A man is born into the world—a real man—such a one as it has never seen; he lives a life consistently the very highest; his wisdom is the calm earnest voice of humanity; to the worldly and the commonplace so exasperating, as forcing upon them their own worthlessness—to the good so admirable that every other faculty is absorbed in wonder. The one killed him. The other said, this is too good to be a man—this is God. His calm and simple life was not startling enough for their eager imagination; acts of mercy and kindness were not enough, unless they were beyond the power of man. To cure by ordinary means the bruised body, to lift again with deep sympathy of heart the sinking sinner, was not enough. He must speak with power to matter as well as mind; eject diseases and eject



devils with command. The means of ordinary birth, to the oriental conception of uncleanness, were too impure for such as he, and one so holy could never dissolve in the vulgar corruption of the grave.

Yet to save his example, to give reality to his sufferings, he was a man nevertheless. In him, as philosophy came in to incorporate the first imagination, was the fulness of humanity as well as the fulness of the Godhead. And out of this strange mixture they composed a being whose life is without instruction, whose example is still nothing, whose trial is but a helpless perplexity. The noble image of the man is effaced, is destroyed. Instead of a man to love and to follow, we have a man-god to worship. From being the example of devotion, he is its object; the religion of Christ ended with his life, and left us instead but the Christian religion. The afflictions which by an act of his own will, as being himself the source of all power, he inflicts upon himself—what afflictions are these? The trial of humanity, which gives dignity to the persevering endurance through life for truth's sake, and which gives death its nobleness, is the constancy of the mind to good, *with uncertainty of the issue*, when it does but feel its duty, and does not know the consequences. The conviction of the martyr that the stake is the gate of Paradise, diminishes the dignity of the suffering in proportion to its strength. If it be absolute certainty, the trial is absolutely nothing. And that all-wise Being who knew all, who himself willed, erected, determined all, what

could the worst earthly suffering be to him to whom all the gates which close our knowledge were shining crystal? What trial, what difficulty was it all to him? His temptation is a mockery. His patience, meekness, humility, it is but trifling with words, unless he was a man, and but a man.

And yet what does it not say on the other side *for* mankind, that the life of one good man, which had nothing, nothing but its goodness to recommend it, should have struck so deep into the heart of the race that for eighteen hundred years they have seen in that life something so far above them that they will not claim a kindred origin with him who lived it. And while they have scarcely bettered in their own practice, yet stand, and ever since have stood, self-condemned, in acknowledging in spite of themselves that such goodness alone is divine. This is their ideal, their highest.

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People canvas up and down the value and utility of Christianity, and none of them seem to see that it was the common channel towards which all the great streams of thought in the old world were tending, and that in some form or other when they came to unite it must have been. That it crystallized round a particular person may have been an accident; but in its essence, as soon as the widening intercourse of the nations forced the Jewish mind into contact with the Indian and the Persian and

the Grecian, such a religion was absolutely inevitable.

It was the development of Judaism in being the fulfilment of the sacrificial theory, and the last and purest conception of a personal God lying close above the world, watching, guiding, directing, interfering. Its object was no longer the narrow one of the temporal interests of a small people. The chrysalis had burst its shell, and the presiding care extended to all mankind, caring not now for bodies only but for souls. It was the development of Parsism in settling finally the vast question of the double principle, the position of the evil spirit, his history, and the method of his defeat; while Zoroaster's doctrine of a future state was now for the first time explained and justified; and his invisible world of angels and spirits, and the hierarchies of the seven heavens, were brought in subjection to the same one God of the Jews.

It was the development of the speculative Greek philosophy of the school of Plato, of the doctrine of the Spirit, and the mysterious Trinity, the *ἐν καὶ πᾶν*, the word or intellect becoming active in the primal Being; while, lastly, the Hindoo doctrine of the incarnation is the uniting element in which the other three combine, and which interpenetrates them with an awful majesty which singly they had not known.

So these four streams uniting formed into an enormous system, comprehending all which each was seeking for, and bringing it all down home, close to earth, human, direct, and tangible, and sup-



plying mankind with full measure of that spiritual support with which only minds most highly disciplined can afford to dispense.

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[These fragments require no comment. They are their own. I will but add one more, one which I think really remarkable in itself.]

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The source of all superstition is the fear of having offended God, the sense of something within ourselves which we call sin. Sin, in its popular and therefore most substantial sense, means the having done something to gratify ourselves which we knew, or might have known, was displeasing to God. It depends, therefore, for its essence on the doer having had the power of acting otherwise than he did. When there is no such power there is no sin. Now let us examine this. In reflecting upon our own actions we find that they arise from the determination of our will, as we call the ultimate moral principle of action, upon some object. When we will, we will something, not nothing. Objects attract or repel the will by the appearance of something in themselves either desirable or undesirable. And in every action, if analysed, the will is found to have been determined by the presence of the greatest degree of desirableness on the side towards which it has been determined. It is alike self-contradictory and contrary to experience, that a man of two goods

should choose the lesser, knowing it *at the time* to be the lesser. Observe, I say, at the time of action. We are complex, and therefore, in our natural state, inconsistent, beings, and the opinion of this hour need not be the opinion of the next. It may be different before the temptation appear; it may return to be different after the temptation is passed; the nearness or distance of objects may alter their relative magnitude, or appetite or passion may obscure the reflecting power, and give a temporary impulsive force to a particular side of our nature. But, uniformly, given a particular condition of a man's nature, and given a number of possible courses, his action is as necessarily determined into the course best corresponding to that condition, as a bar of steel suspended between two magnets is determined towards the most powerful. It may go reluctantly, for it will still feel the attraction of the weaker magnet, but it will still obey the strongest, and must obey. What we call knowing a man's character, is knowing how he will act in such and such conditions. The better we know him the more surely we can prophecy. If we know him perfectly, we are certain.

So that it appears that at the stage first removed from the action, we cannot find what we called the necessary condition of *sin*. It is not there; and we must look for it a step higher among the causes which determine the conditions under which the man acts. Here we find the power of motives depends on the character, or the want of character. If no character be formed, they will in-



fluence according to the temporary preponderance of this or that part of the nature ; if there be formed character, on the conditions, again, which have formed it, on past habits, and therefore on past actions. Go back, therefore, upon these, and we are again in the same way referred higher and still higher, until we arrive at the first condition, the natural powers and faculties with which the man has been sent into the world.

Therefore, while we find such endless differences between the actions of different men under the same temptations, or of the same man at different times, we shall yet be unable to find any link of the chain undetermined by the action of the outward circumstance on the inner law ; or any point where we can say a power lay in the individual will of choosing either of two courses,—in other words, to discover sin. Actions are governed by motives. The power of motives depends on character, and character on the original faculties and the training which they have received from the *men* or *things* among which they have been bred.

Sin, therefore, as commonly understood, is a chimera.

If you ask me why, then, conscience so imperatively declares that it is real? I answer, conscience declares nothing of the kind. We are conscious simply of what we do, and of what is done to us. The judgment may come in to pass sentence ; but the judgment is formed on instruction and experience, and may be as wrong in this matter



as in any other: being trained in the ordinary theory of morals, it will and must judge according to it; but it does not follow that it must be right, any more than if it be trained in a particular theory of politics, and judges according to that, it must be right. Men obey an appetite under present temptation, to obey which they have before learned will be injurious to them, and which, after the indulgence, they again learn has been injurious to them; but which, at the time, they either expected would, in their case, remit its natural penalty, or else, about which, being blinded by their feelings, they never thought at all. Looking back on their past state of mind, and finding it the same as that to which they have returned when the passions have ceased to work, it seems to them that they knew better, and might have done otherwise. They wish they had. They feel they have hurt themselves, and imagine they have broken a law. It is true they have broken the higher law, but not in the way which they fancy, but by obeying the lower law, which at the time was the stronger. Our instinct has outrun our theory in this matter; for while we still insist upon free will and sin, we make allowance for individuals who have gone wrong, on the very ground of provocation, of temptation, of bad education, of infirm character. By and by philosophy will follow, and so at last we may hope for a true theory of morals. It is curious to watch, in the history of religious beliefs, the gradual elimination of this monster of moral evil. The first state of mankind is the unreflecting state. The

nature is undeveloped, looking neither before nor after ; it acts on the impulse of the moment, and is troubled with no weary retrospect, nor with any notions of a remote future which present conduct can affect ; and knowing neither good nor evil, better or worse, it does simply what it desires, and is happy in it. It is the state analogous to the early childhood of each of us, and is represented in the common theory of Paradise—the state of innocence.

But men had to grow as we grew. Their passions developed rapidly, their minds slowly ; but fast enough to allow them in the interval of passion, to reflect upon themselves, to generalise, and form experience ; and, acquiring thus rudimental notions of laws from observing the tendency of actions, men went through what is called the Fall ; and obtained that knowledge of good and evil which Schiller calls “*ein Riesen Schritt der Menschheit.*” Feeling instinctively that the laws under which they were, were not made by themselves, but that a power was round and over them greater than themselves, they formed the notion of a lawgiver, whom they conceived they could please by obedience to the best they knew, and make angry by following the worse. It is an old remark, that as men are, such they paint their gods ; and as in themselves the passionate, or demonic nature, long preponderated, so the gods they worshipped were demons like themselves, jealous, capricious, exacting, revengeful, the figures which fill the old mythologies, and appear partly in the Old Testament. They feared them as they feared



the powerful of their own race, and sought to propitiate them by similar offerings and services.

Go on, and now we find ourselves on a third stage; but now fast rising into a clearing atmosphere. The absolute worth of goodness is seen as distinct from power; such beings as these demon gods could not be the highest beings. Good and evil could not coexist in one Supreme; absolutely different in nature they could not have a common origin; the moral world is bipolar, and we have dualism, the two principles, coeternal, coequal.

By and by, again, the horizon widens. The *ultimate* identity of might and right glimmers out fully in the Zenda Vesta as the stars come out above the mountains when we climb out of the mist of the valleys. The evil spirit is no longer the absolute independent Ahriman; but Ahriman and Ormuzd are but each a dependent spirit; and an awful formless, boundless figure, the eternal, the illimitable, looms out from the abyss behind them, presently to degrade still farther the falling Ahriman into a mere permitted Satan, finally to be destroyed.

Such a position could not long continue: after two hundred years of vague efforts after Pantheism, which would have leapt the chasm, not bridged it, out came the great doctrine of the atonement, the final defeat of the *power* of sin; the last stage before the dissolution of the idea.

Finally rises philosophy, which after a few monstrous efforts from Calvin to Leibnitz to reconcile contradictions and form a theodice, comes out boldly



in Spinozism to declare the impossibility of the existence of a power antagonistic to God; and defining the perfection of man's nature, as the condition under which it has fullest action and freest enjoyment of all its powers, sets this as a moral ideal before us, toward which we shall train our moral efforts as the artist trains his artistic efforts towards his ideal. The success is various, as the faculties and conditions which God has given are various; but the spectre which haunted the conscience is gone. Our failures are errors, not crimes—nature's discipline with which God teaches us; and as little violations of his law, or rendering us guilty in His eyes, as the artist's early blunders, or even ultimate and entire failures, are laying store of guilt on him.

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It could not last with Markham, this philosophising, I knew it could not. It was but the working off in a sort of moral fermentation of the strong corruption with which his mind had become impregnated. Markham's heart had more in it than blood, and his nature was either too weak or else too genuine to find its cravings satisfied, when he had resolved the great life of humanity, these six thousand years of man's long wrestle with the angel of destiny, into a cold system in which he could calculate the ebb and flow as on the tables of a tide. Doubtless, some such way of reading it there is; but wo to him to whom it is given to read it so; more than man ever was, he must be, or far less, not such a one

at any rate as poor Markham. The spell broke; one day I had a letter from him of the old sort, of which his heart, not his head, had had the making. He was unwell, and the philosophising spirit which had possessed him, thinking a failing tenement no longer worth its occupying, had flung it off again to its old owner. Whether it was that the unclean thing was but making a brief absence for some process of sweeping and garnishing to take place against a fuller possession, whatever it was, it was gone; and he himself, for the better comforting of soul and body, was going off to spend a winter at Como. He was going alone; one of his sisters offered to accompany him, but it was an offer of duty rather than affection; and as those very dutiful people are so punctiliously scrupulous in keeping both sides of the equation equal, and as, poor fellow, he felt he would have to pay for what he received on one side by a yet further reduction of the little stock he had remaining upon the other, he thought it would be better for himself, for her and all of them, to hold himself under his own keeping and trouble them no further. He was not ill enough to be alarmed or to alarm us; . . . so only the seven devils were kept away, which seemed the only danger.

Well, Markham went. Over the few centre pages of his life, while this fermenting was at its worst, we have till now been turning; what follows wilt complete it from its beginning, and we shall see what he was before, and whither, by and by, he was determined. Scepticism, like wisdom, springs out

in full panoply only from the brain of a god, and it is little profit to see an idea in its growth, unless we track its seed to the power which sowed it. Among other matters with which he entertained himself in this Italian winter was a retrospective sketch, which to me, as I read it, appeared of a value quite unspeakable as an analysis of a process through which in these last years so many minds besides his own have been slowly and silently devolving. I had intended to mutilate it, but that each page pleaded with so much earnestness to be the one that I was to choose, that I could only satisfy all by taking all. It is not long, it was broken off abruptly, we shall see by and by how broken; but it is carried down to a point, when we can link it on with no too serious aposiopesis to those first letters which have already caused in us feelings which I will not endeavour to analyse, lest I find in myself more sympathy with them, than I wish to think I feel.



## CONFESSIONS OF A SCEPTIC.

THAT there is something very odd about this life of ours, that it is a kind of Egyptian bondage, where a daily tale of bricks must be given in, yet where we have no straw given us wherewith to burn them, is a very old confession indeed. We cry for something we cannot find; we cannot satisfy ourselves with what we do find, and there is more than cant in that yearning after a better land of promise, as all men know when they are once driven in upon themselves and compelled to be serious. Every pleasure palls, every employment possible for us is in the end vanity and disappointment—the highest employment most of all. We start with enthusiasm—out we go each of us to our task in all the brightness of sunrise, and hope beats along our pulses; we believe the world has no blanks except to cowards, and we find, at last, that, as far as we ourselves are concerned, it has no prizes; we sicken over the endless unprofitableness of labour most when we have most succeeded, and when the time comes for us to lay down our tools we cast them from us with the bitter aching sense, that it were better for us if it had been all a dream. We seem to know either too much or too little of ourselves—too much, for we feel that we are better than we can

accomplish; too little, for, if we have done any good at all, it has been as we were servants of a system too vast for us to comprehend. We get along through life happily between clouds and sunshine, forgetting ourselves in our employments or our amusements, and so long as we can lose our consciousness in activity we can struggle on to the end. But when the end comes, when the life is lived and done, and stands there face to face with us; or if the heart is weak, and the spell breaks too soon, as if the strange master-worker has no longer any work to offer us, and turns us off to idleness and to ourselves; in the silence then our hearts lift up their voices, and cry out they can find no rest here, no home. Neither pleasure, nor rank, nor money, nor success in life, as it is called, have satisfied or can satisfy; and either earth has nothing at all which answers to our cravings, or else it is something different from all these, which we have missed finding—this peace which passes understanding—and from which in the heyday of hope we had turned away, as lacking the meretricious charm which then seemed most alluring.

I am not sermonizing of Religion, or of God, or of Heaven, at least not directly. These are often but the catchwords on the lips of the vulgarly disappointed; which, like Plato's Cephalus, they grasp at as earthly pleasures glide out of their hands; not from any genuine heart or love for them, but because they are words which seem to have a meaning—shadows which fill up the blank when all else

is gone away. But there is one strong direction into which the needle of our being, when left to itself, is for ever determined, which is more than a catchword, which in the falsest heart of all remains still desperately genuine, the one last reality of which universal instinct is assured.

When my eyes wander down the marble pages on the walls of the church aisles, or when I stray among the moss-grown stones lying there in their long grassy couches in the churchyard, and spell out upon them the groupings of the fast crumbling names, there I find the talisman. It is home. Far round the earth as their life callings may have scattered men, here is their treasure, for here their heart has been. They have gone away to live; they come home to die, to lay their dust in their fathers' sepulchre, and resign their consciousness in the same spot where first it broke into being. Whether it be that here are their first dearest recollections of innocent happiness; whether the same fair group which once laughed around the old fire-side would gather in together and tie up again the broken links in the long home where they shall never part again; whether there be some strange instinct, which compels all men back to the scene of their birth, to lay their bodies down in the same church which first received them, and where they muttered their first prayer; whatever be the cause—like those cunning Indian weapons which, projected from the hand, fly up their long arc into the air, yet when their force is spent glide back



to the spot from which they were flung—the spent life travellers carry back their bodies to the old starting point of home.

The fish struggle back to their native rivers; the passage birds to the old woods where they made their first adventure on the wings which since have borne them round the world. The dying eagle drags his feeble flight to his own eyrie, and men toil-worn and careworn gather back from town and city, from battle-field or commerce mart, and fling off the load where they first began to bear it. Home—yes, home is the one perfectly pure earthly instinct which we have. We call heaven our home, as the best name we know to give it. So strong is this craving in us, that, when cross fortune has condemned the body to a distant resting-place, yet the name is written on the cenotaph in the old place, as if only choosing to be remembered in the scene of its own most dear remembrance. Oh, most touching are these monuments! Sermons more eloquent were never heard inside the church walls than may be read there. Whether those hopes, written there so confidently, of after risings and blessed meetings beyond the grave, are any more than the “perhaps” with which we try to lighten up its gloom, and there be indeed that waking for which they are waiting there so silently, or whether these few years be the whole they are compelled to bear of personal existence, and all which once was is reborn again in other forms which are not there any more, still are those marble stones the

most touching witness of the temper of the human heart, the life in death protesting against the life which was lived.

Nor, I think, shall we long wonder or have far to look for the causes of so wide a feeling, if we turn from the death side to the life side, and see what it has been to us even in the middle of the very business itself of living. For as it is in this atmosphere that all our sweetest, because most innocent child memories are embosomed, so all our life along, when the world but knows us as men of pleasure or men of business, when externally we seem to have taken our places in professions, and are no longer single beings, but integral parts of the large social being; at home, when we come home, we lay aside our mask and drop our tools, and are no longer lawyers, sailors, soldiers, statesmen, clergymen, but only men. We fall again into our most human relations, which, after all, are the whole of what belongs to us as we are ourselves, and alone have the key-note of our hearts. There our skill, if skill we have, is exercised with real gladness on home subjects. We are witty if it be so, not for applause but for affection. We paint our fathers' or our sisters' faces, if so lies our gift, because we love them; the mechanic's genius comes out in playthings for the little brothers, and we cease the struggle in the race of the world, and give our hearts leave and leisure to love. No wonder the scene and all about it is so dear to us. How beautiful to turn back the life page to those old winter firesides, when the apple hoards were opened, and

the best old wine came up out of its sawdust, and the boys came back from school to tell long stories of their fagging labours in the brief month of so dear respite, or still longer of the day's adventures and the hair-breadth escapes of larks and black-birds. The merry laugh at the evening game; the admiring wonder of the young children woke up from their first sleep to see their elder sisters dressed out in smiles and splendour for the ball at the next town. It may seem strange to say things like these have any character of religion; and yet I sometimes think they are themselves religion itself, forming, as they do, the very integral groups in such among our life pictures as have been painted in with colours of real purity. Even of the very things which we most search for in the business of life, we must go back to home to find the healthiest types. The loudest shouts of the world's applause give us but a faint shadow of the pride we drew from father's and sister's smiles, when we came back with our first school prize at the first holidays. The wildest pleasures of after-life are nothing like so sweet as the old game, the old dance, old Christmas, with its mummers and its mistletoe, and the kitchen saturnalia. Nay, perhaps, even the cloistered saint, who is drawing a long life of penitential austerity to a close, and through the crystal gates of death is gazing already on the meadows of Paradise, may look back with awe at the feeling which even now he cannot imitate, over his first prayer at his mother's side in the old church at home.



Yes, there we all turn our eyes at last; the world's glitter for a time blinds us; but with the first serious thought the old notes come echoing back again. It is as if God, knowing the weary temptations, the hollow emptiness of the life which yet we needs must lead, had ordained our first years for the laying in an unconscious stock of sweet and blessed thoughts to feed us along our way. We talk much of the religious discipline of our schools, and moral training and mind developing, and what more we will of the words without meaning, the hollow verbiage of our written and spoken thoughts about ourselves; yet I question whether the home of childhood has not more to do with religion than all the teachers and the teaching, and the huge unfathomed folios. Look back and think of it, and we cannot separate the life we lived from our religion, nor our religion from our life. They wind in and in together, the gold and silver threads interlacing through the warp; and the whole forms together then in one fair image of what after-life might and ought to be, and what it never is. No idle, careless, thoughtless man, so long as he persists in being what he is, can endure the thought of home any more than he can endure the thought of God. At his first return to himself, it is the first thought which God sends . . . well for him if it be not too late. If we could read the diary of suicide, and trace the struggles of the bleeding heart, in suspense yet between the desire and its execution, yet drawing nearer and ever nearer, and gazing with more fixed

intensity on the grave as the end of its sorrow, ah, will not the one fair thought then on which it will last rest be the green memories of home! The last deep warning note either filling up and finishing the measure of despair with its maddening loveliness, or else, if there be one spot not utterly wasted and destroyed where life and love can yet take root and grow, once more to quicken there, and win back for earth its child again.

The world had its Golden Age—its Paradise—and religion, which is the world's heart, clings to its memory. Beautiful it lies there—on the far horizon of the past—the sunset which shall, by and by, be the sunrise of Heaven. Yes, and God has given us each our own Paradise, our own old childhood, over which the old glories linger—to which our own hearts cling, as all we have ever known of Heaven upon earth. . . . . And there, as all earth's weary wayfarers turn back their toil-jaded eyes, so do the poor speculators, one of whom is this writer, whose thoughts have gone astray, who has been sent out like the raven from the window of the ark, and flown to and fro over the ocean of speculation, finding no place for his soul to rest, no pause for his aching wings, turn back in thought, at least, to that old time of peace—that village church—that child-faith—which, once lost, is never gained again—strange mystery—is never gained again—with sad and weary longing! Ah! you who look with cold eyes on such a one, and lift them up to Heaven, and thank God you are not

such as he,—and call him hard names, and think of him as of one who is forsaking a cross, and pursuing unlawful indulgence, and deserving all good men's reproach! Ah! could you see down below his heart's surface, could you count the tears streaming down his cheeks, as out through some church-door into the street come pealing the old familiar notes, and the old psalms which he cannot sing, the chaunted creed which is no longer his creed, and yet to part with which was worse agony than to lose his dearest friend; ah! you would deal him lighter measure. What, is not his cup bitter enough, but that all the good, whose kindness at least, whose sympathy and sorrow, whose prayers he might have hoped for, that these must turn away from him, as from an offence, as from a thing forbid?—that he must tread the wine-press alone, calling no God-fearing man his friend; and this, too, with the sure knowledge that coldness, least of all, he is deserving, for God knows it is no pleasant task which has been laid upon him! Well, be it so. You cannot take my heart from me. You cannot take away my memory. I will not say, would to God you could, although it is through these that I am wounded, and, if these nerves were killed, I should know pain no longer. No, cost me what it will, I will struggle back, and reproduce for myself those old scenes where then I lived—that old faith which, then, alas! I could believe—which made all my happiness, so long as any happiness was possible to me.

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You will never have perfect men, Plato says, till you have perfect circumstances. Perhaps a true saying!—but, till the philosopher is born who can tell us what circumstances are perfect, a sufficiently speculative one. At any rate, one finds strange enough results—often the very best—coming up out of conditions the most unpromising. Such a bundle of odd contradictions we human beings are, that perhaps full as many repellent as attracting influences are acquired, before we can give our hearts to what is right. Yet, as a whole, my own childhood found as much favour as any one can fairly hope for; and, as I look back, I can see few things which I could wish had been otherwise. I say this, neither in shame for what I am not, nor as refusing credit for what I am. I am concerned only with the facts—what I was, and what has resulted out of me. We were a religious family—I mean a sober, serious family—not enthusiastically devotional—very little good comes to children from over-passionate straining in this matter. Grown men, who have sinned, and who have known their sin, whose hearts have shed themselves in tears of blood, who can feel the fulness of the language of religion from their own experience of their failings and their helplessness, and have heard the voice of God speaking to them in their despair, *they* may be enthusiastic if they will—pour themselves out in long prayers, and hymns, and psalms, and have His name for ever on their lips—they may, because it will be real with them. But it is not so with child-

ren ; their young bright spirits know little yet of the burden of life which is over them. They have hardly yet sinned—far less awakened out of sin—and it is ill wisdom, even if it be possible, to train their conscience into precocious sensitiveness. Long devotions are a weariness to healthy children. If, unhappily, they have been made unhealthy—if they have been taught to look into themselves, and made to imagine themselves miserable and fallen, and every moment exciting God's anger, and so need these long devotions—their premature sensibility will exhaust itself over comparative trifles ; and, by and by, when the real occasion comes, they will find that, like people who talk of common things in superlatives, their imagination will have wasted what will then be really needed. Their present state will explain to themselves the unreality of their former state ; but the heart will have used out its power, and thoughts, which have been made unreal, by an unreal use of them, will be unreal still, and for ever. This was not our case. We, happily, were never catechised about our feelings ; and so our feelings, slight as they were, were always genuine. Religion, with us, was to do our duty ; that is, to say our lessons every day ; to say our prayers morning and evening ; to give up as many as we could of our own wishes for one another ; and to earn good marks, which, though but slips of blue paper, were found, at the end of the month, to be good current paper of sterling value, and convertible into sixpences, which we stored up to make



presents to our kind governess, and kinder aunt. Our own little prayers we said always by ourselves, at our bedside; the Lord's Prayer out loud, and small extempore ones, which we kept under a whisper, because they were commonly small intercessions for some dear friends; which we shrunk from letting those friends hear; for fear they might be grateful to us, and that would be stealing so much of our pleasure in ourselves. Then, besides these, we had family prayers in the school-room, which were far from being so pleasant or so easy to attend to. They were read out of a book by the governess, and we did not know them; they were in long words which we did not understand; I always counted them among the unpleasant duties, and I longed for them to be over. Two long words particularly, that came in the middle, I used to watch for, as I knew then that half the time was past. If I had been asked whether I did not know that this was very disrespectful, and that I ought to have had the same reverence in the school-room as in the silence of my own sleeping place, I suppose I should have answered quite satisfactorily; but I should not have answered truly. Whatever may be the case with men, children, at any rate, only feel; they do not know; I did not feel the same, and that was enough. I had said what I wanted; this was a form which I might respect generally, but could not enter into. Well, and after that came the Psalms and chapters. The Psalms we used to read verse and verse; and here again I was very imperfectly what I



ought to have been. I could make nothing of them read in this way; I could not understand how anybody could; and very early then, I made an observation which I have never seen reason to alter, that nothing short of special interference with miracle will enable any heads ever to understand them, into which they have been beaten in the popular English fashion. I got a general reverence for them, as for the rest of the service, because they were treated reverentially by those I revered; but, for anything they taught me, they might have been kept in the old Hebrew: far better, indeed, as I should not then, as I do now, have known them all by heart, finding still their meaning sealed to me under the trodden familiarity of sound. To this day I can make nothing of the Psalms, except when I see a verse or two quoted, and the meaning so held out before me, or else when I read them in a less familiar language. Yet even so they will translate into the old jingle, and the evil reproduces itself. It fared no better with the Prophecies and Epistles. But all this was compensated by the stories in the Old and New Testament, which were the most intense delight to me. With a kind of half-fear I was doing something wrong, I used to transform my person into those I read about. I was Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Joseph I liked best of all; I believe because he had such a pretty coat, and because he was good and ill-treated. Benjamin never took my fancy; everything went too well with him. I was always sorry at leaving off at the ends of chapters; I should have liked better to

have had the stories complete ; but I believed it was all right ; that there was virtue in verses and chapters, as in everything else in the Bible. Whatever I may think at present of all this, and of the good and ill effects on the whole of our mechanical treatment of the Bible ; still, I am sure that it is in this early unreasoning reverence that the secret lies of our all believing it as we do ; and that it is here, and not in authenticities, and evidences, and miracles, and prophecy fulfilments, that our faith is rooted. We start on our reasonings with foregone conclusions ; and well for us that we do so, or they would lead us certainly a very different road.

Well, so went on our lives. The horizon of our little home valley was not very wide ; and our moral horizon was no wider ; yet inside them lay all our world. We visited little ; and what company came was always *company* ; not nice pleasant friends, but a set of alien beings, only made to be looked at when we came in to dessert, and hardly known to be our fellow-creatures. They might have come from the stars for all we cared ; and they took notice of us in ways we did not like in the least. The people of the village, our own family, and the servants, were all we recognised as *people*. They were the inhabitants of our own world. In the school-room lay our duties ; outside, in the garden, or in the copses beyond, where the brook ran and the violets grew, was our pleasure place, while round it all lay the great wood with its dark trees and gloomy underpaths, into which we gazed with a kind of awful



horror, as the ghost and robber and fairy-haunted edge of the world which closed it in. We were like an old camp in the wilderness, on some Arabian oasis, in which we lived as the old patriarchs lived. We had our father, our mother, brothers, sisters; and the old faces of the old servants, and the sheep and the cows in the meadow, and the birds upon the trees, and the poultry in the bushes, and the sky, and God who lived in it; and that was all. And what a beautiful all! My delight, in the long summer afternoons, was to lie stretched out upon the grass, watching the thin white clouds floating up so high there in the deep æther, and wondering how far it was from their edge up to the blue, where God was.

I have often thought it is part of the inner system of this earth that each one of us should repeat over again in his own experience the spiritual condition of each of its antecedent eras; and surely we at home in this way repeated over again the old patriarchal era in all its richness. Here were we in our little earth. There above was our Father in heaven—not so far away. He heard us when we prayed to Him—His eyes were ever upon us—He called us His children—He loved us and cared for us. The imagination is too true to discriminate great distances of time. God had been down on this earth of ours; and talked to the patriarchs and to Moses. They were very old; but then papa was very old too, and I used to look at his silver hair, and wonder whether he had ever seen Abraham—whether he perhaps had seen God. Nay



once I remember, in an odd confusion of the name of father, the thought crossing me that he might be something very high indeed.

Well, to such children as we were, Sunday was a very intense delight. First of all, there were no lessons; then we had our best clothes; we had no employment which we liked, that Sunday interfered with. We might not dig in the gardens; but we did not complain of that if we might still look at the flowers and smell them. Every thing was at rest about us. The school-room was shut up. The family dined between churches, so that that day we were admitted to the parlour, and going to church was delightful. The day was God's own particular day, and church was God's own house. He was really there we were told, though I rather wondered we did not see him; and to go there was the happiest thing we knew. I thought the services rather long, and I did not much understand them; but I always liked all except the sermon. I liked evening service best because it was shorter; but I remember thinking it was not wisely shortened: and I would gladly have compounded to take back litany and communion to get off sermon. It was long words again; and I felt towards it much as I did to school-room prayers. As Goëthe says of Gretchen, when we were at church it was—

“Halb Kinderspiel halb Gott im Herzen.”

Yet we loved God in our child's fashion, and it was the more delightful that neither feeling absorbed us.

The singing was very pleasant; but best of all it was when a poor, too-curious robin had strayed into the aisles, and went wandering in alarmed perplexity up and down among the long arches, beating its little beak against the window glass, or alighting on the shoulder of one of the little painted cherubims, with its shrill note lending a momentary voice to the stone harp which hung stringless in those angel-fingers. After church we said our catechism, at which I was always best able to answer my duty towards my neighbour; but neither I nor my sister, who said it with me, could ever make much of our duty towards God. We had our own feelings, which this somehow interfered with; it was not in easy enough language, and, as we knew the routine of it very tolerably, we took turns to begin, that we might escape. Yet there was always this compensation, that whichever got off that had the two long answers. But best of all were the Sunday evenings,—alas, how unlike our experience of later Sunday evenings,—for one of two delights was always sure to me; either dear Miss H—— read me the Fairy Queen, which then was only second to the Bible with me, or else the older ones of the party would play with us young ones at animal, vegetable, and mineral—that first intrusion of philosophy into the holy place; which by and by would play work there we little enough dreamed of then. Infinite was the glee with which we strained our memory for the oddest stories, and the oddest things in them, to be hunted down the

scent which the questions drew from us. The head of the floating axe was a great favourite; so was Jael's nail; or, harder still, the lordly dish in which the butter was presented. Kind elder ones, as then we thought, to trifle so with us; but my since experience of Sunday evenings in England has taught me that they were not so altogether losers, and I would gladly, as I grew up, have exchanged my devout sermon readings for the smallest game with the smallest child. Unhappily we fell, after a time, under another régime; we lost our games; my Fairy Queen, too, was sent to sleep upon her shelf; a profane poet was thought unfit for Sunday's serious perusing. In truth the allegory was not thought much of; Una was a fair damsel in distress—the lion a real, good, grand, noble lion, such as we saw at the menagerie; how I hated that Sansfoy for killing him. I am tempted to say here how serious a mistake we grown Protestants make with these modern Sundays of ours. I was after taught no book not strictly religious might be read. Sermons! who can go on reading sermons? I was called naughty if I went to sleep; and, at that time, "Wharton's Deathbed Scenes" was the only book in our library which sweetened the dull medicine with a story. I learnt these by heart, and then I was destitute; and my only comfort in thinking that heaven was all Sunday was the hope that at least there would be no long winter evenings there.

Grown people coquet with their consciences so ridiculously in this matter. They will talk and



think all day of the foolishest of follies; young ladies will wear their best bonnets, thinking only how pretty they look in them: but to read a book of foolishness, or to act out the gay dress into a pleasure party, is sin. Some people will read letters, but not write them; but generally both are permitted, as well as newspapers. A magazine is a debateable point—questionable; though many degrees better than a book. A book, if you will have a book, must be a volume of sermons; or, at least, of commentaries. But to return to my healthy young Sundays; they were all bright. It seemed as if on Sunday it never rained; and one way or another, at least at home, it has never lost its calm, quiet beauty. The flowers wear a less business-like colour; the fields catch the colour of our spirits, and seem to lie in obedient repose. I cannot think the cattle do not feel it is not as other days; the lambs have a kind of going to church frisk about them; your dog, on every other day your faithfullest of companions, lies out before the hall-door, and never thinks of following you till after evening service; and your horse, if you have him out in the morning, looks a sermon full of puritan reproaches at you. The sacredness of Sunday is stamped on the soil of England, and in the heart of every Englishman; and all this by the old Sundays we remember of the first ten years of our lives.

So it was that, without any notion of the mystery of Christianity, I grew up in the intensest reverence for it; the more intense because I had no notion of

its meaning. I cannot say what the Bible was not to me. I remember once in a fit of passionate bravado, when I was required to do something I did not like, saying "I swear I will not." I meant nothing except a great expression of my resolution. My sister told me I had taken God's name in vain; and my conscience burnt in what I had done upon my heart as if with a branding iron, and there lies its memory—uneffaced and ineffaceable.

Alas, alas, for the change! as I write, I seem for a moment to feel the old pulsations: but it is all gone away—gone like a dream in the morning—gone with the fairy-peopled world where then I thought we had our dwelling. "The things that I have felt, I now can feel no more;" when God gave them to me I felt them. He gave them—he has taken them away. The child is not as the man, and heaven lies all round our lives; in our young years we gambol upon its shores, and gather images from the shapes of light that sparkle there; and those light beings hover round us in our after wanderings, to hold our souls true in faith: that as the child was so in the end the man may be; and better far than that.

I am not going to trouble further the old vexed question of home and school education; but as I have been speaking of the religious sensibilities which form themselves at home, and as I have found that home and the thoughts connected with it are the elements out of which these are wrought, and the food upon which they feed; so I am sure that these

sensibilities are the strongest among those who remain longest in this home nursery garden, and, whatever may become of the others, their roots at least will never strike in a foreign soil. Character, vigour, independence, these may best form when there is most occasion for independent action, and the boy thrown upon himself in the hard world atmosphere of school, having to make his way and push himself and take his own position, will be better formed by far, perhaps, to elbow along in after-life by practice of elbowing among schoolboys. And, till we know something (at present we know nothing at all) of the form after which it is most God's will man should most shape himself, it is idle to lay down laws for the *best* way of forming him. Here I am concerned with religious sensibility, which unquestionably is weakened in every school as it is in the world. It leads to no results does religion, in the first, any more than in the last; the forms of religion may be kept up, the outside praying and the chapel going, some instruction too for decency's sake; Greek Testament classes, article classes and such like. But I will appeal to every boy's experience, whether all this has anything to do with his real religion, or whether it looks to much advantage by the side of the prayer-book his mother gave him, or the Bible his sisters subscribed to buy for him. I will ask him whether the tenderest form in which his divinity is taught at school, has not seemed to him worldly and irreverent; whether there, it is not lessons, business, discipline—not love, heart and



pleasure; and whether passing from the school Sunday to the first Sunday at home in holidays has not been passing from earth into heaven. The older we grow, the more surely we each feel our own sincere experience to be the type of all sincere experience, and I make my appeal without any fear at all. . . . . The same feelings, if I know anything of human nature, we shall all recognise; the same voice in which God has spoken to our hearts. Once for all, religion cannot be *taught* to boys.—Not till the man is formed, not till the mind has been drawn out of itself and forced to read, with its own eyes and not with the eyes of books, the world and the men that move and live in it; not till the strangeness of their own nature has broken upon them, till they have looked fairly at this strange scene on earth here, “this huge stage,” and all its shows on “which the stars with silent influence are commenting,” not till they have felt the meaning of history, have come to feel that in very deed the actions of which they read, the books in which they read them, were done and made by beings in all points like themselves—in the same trials, mysteries and temptations—not till then can religion in its awfulness come out before men’s minds as a thing to be thought of; not till the question is asked will reason accept the answer. It is the last, not the first, scene of education. It cannot, try how you will, it cannot come before; till then it can be but a feeling—and so with this writer; God knows whether all his teaching weakened his feeling: it certainly could not deepen it—yet at any

rate, ill obeyed as it was, the old faith he had learnt to love still held its place next his heart, till the time came for the change when the reason must assume its own responsibilities. I will step lightly over this period, long as it was; I had been trained in rigid Protestantism—Faber on the Prophecies, Southey's Book of the Church, had been the pet books into which I had been directed. The Devil was at the bottom, and the Pope, the unquestionable Antichrist, very near him; and if possible an improvement on his ugliness. And the fulfilment, the exact fulfilment, of the prophecies, in the matter, for example, of the scarlet robe, the forbidding to marry, and the meat fasting, had always struck me, not as proofs of the truth of Christianity—Heaven knows I never thought of that—but as the most wonderful instances of the exactness with which the courses of the world were marked out for it.

So I was at about sixteen. Young boys take what they are told with readiest acquiescence, and difficulties are easily put away by a healthy mind as temptations of the devil. Cruelties said to have been committed by God's order in the Old Testament never struck me as cruelties; I glided on without notice over the massacres of women and children, much as good sensible people nowadays slide over the sufferings of "the masses;" condensing them into the one short word, and dismissing them as briefly as the lips dismiss the sound. . . . . If misgivings ever for a moment arose, I had but to remember they were idolaters; and what was too bad



for a people so wicked as to be that? I remember thinking it odd that I should be taught to admire Hector, and Æneas, and Ulysses, and so many of them, when all they were idolaters too. What had we to do with the wisdom of Cicero, when he was as great a sinner as these Canaanites? But I readily laid the blame on the defects of my own understanding, I was sure it was all right; and, though I read Hume and Gibbon, I hated them cordially, only doubting whether they were greater fools or greater knaves.

..... Why an all-knowing God, too, should require us to pray to Him, should threaten to punish us if we did not, when He knew what we wanted better than we knew ourselves; why we should put our wishes into words when we even felt ourselves how imperfectly words expressed our feelings, and He could know them without; nay, more, why, when as I began to be taught we could not pray without He gave us Himself the wish to pray, and the words to pray in, He yet should be angry with us when we did not do it, when He had not made us wish—this, too, seemed very odd to me, . . . . but I dismissed it all as it came, as my own fault, and most likely as very wrong.

Just as I was leaving off being a boy, we fell under a strong Catholicising influence at home, and I used to hear things which were strange enough to my ear. Faber was put away out of my studies; Newton was forbidden; and Davison, that I thought so dry and dull, put in his place. Transubstantiation was talked of before me as more than possible; celibacy of the clergy and fasting on the fast days



were not only not wrong, but the very thing most needful . . . . our own dinners indeed did not suffer diminution . . . . but even to raise the question was sufficiently alarming, and I sat by in silence, listening with the strangest sensations. The martyrdom of Cranmer had always been a great favourite with me; the miracle of the unconsumed heart was a real miracle; at least I had been told so. The fulfilled prophecies about the Pope were real Scripture prophecies, of which I thought the verification almost terribly exact; and, what was worse, the interpretation was made sacred to me by early association . . . . and how to unlearn all this? I believe I may date from this point the first disturbance my mind experienced, and, however long I went on laying the blame upon myself, I never recovered it. I said to myself, if this miracle was not a miracle, how do I know there ever were miracles? This was easily answered, because one sort were in Scripture, and the other only in Southey's book. But as to fulfilment of prophecy, if this was not fulfilment, then what was? we could never be sure of any of it. Davison was no help; for his double sense was the wrong sort of double—double-minded. I went to the New Testament for old prophecies fulfilled there, and I was still more bewildered; for, in no one case that I could find, would it have been possible to conceive without the interpretation that there had been any prophecy at all intended. So I was forced altogether to give up prophecy till more inspiration came to explain it for us. . . . .

Alas! how little we understand the strange mystery of the heart. Thoughts come and go—float across our minds like the cloud shadows on a sunny day; the sun follows out, and no track is seen upon the earth when they have passed—all is bright as before. But the heart lies out under the breath of Providence like the prepared mirror of the photogenic draughtsman; the figure falls there, it rests but a few moments, and then passes away, and no line is seen; but the rays have eaten in and left a form which can never be effaced. . . . . By and by the acid touches it, and there lies the image, full and faithful as the hand could paint it. The first doubt of the affection of one who is dear to us, how angrily we spurn it from us, how we despise and hate ourselves for entertaining a thought so detestable; one stone crumbled off a battlement, how little it affects our sense of its strength, our faith in its duration. Yet the same cause which flung down that one may fling down another and another, and what can begin to perish will at last perish all. I am not speaking of Christianity as it is in the eternal purpose of Almighty God; but of that image, that spiritual copy of it, which grows up in the human microcosm. The first is older than the universe—is coeval with its Maker; but the second is frail as the being in whom it is formed.

Wo to the unlucky man who as a child is taught, even as a portion of his creed, what his grown reason must forswear. Faith endures no barking of the surface; it is a fair, delicate plant



transported out of Paradise into an alien garden, where surest care alone can foster it. But woud the tenderest shoot—but break away one single flower, and though it linger on for years, feeding upon stimulants and struggling through a languishing vitality, it has had its death-blow; the blighted juices fly trembling back into the heart, never to venture out again.

Nevertheless the mind of a young man is very plastic. As personal affection lies at the root of our first opinions, so the influence of persons whom we love and venerate is for a long time paramount; and, by a natural necessity, a mind falling in its growth under the influence of a great man, great alike in genius and in character, assumes the imprint such a man will fix upon it, and most imitates what it most admires. Only wider experience flings us back upon ourselves; the experience which shows us that men who, while they unite all the greatest qualities in greatest measure, may yet be as various in opinion as in the variety of their gifts—as various as the million varieties of beautiful objects with which God has ornamented the earth. Painful, indeed, is the moment when this first breaks upon us. It is easy to be decided so long as we feel so sure that all goodness is on our side; and only badness, moral badness, or else folly, can take the other; but how terrible becomes the alternative when we know men as they really are!

Well, the great men under whose influence I now fell dealt tenderly with the imbibed preju-



dices even of Protestantism; and, holding on by persons standing so firmly as they seemed to stand, I did not seem to have lost any thing—to have weakened my moral footing. They could make all allowance, sympathise with my sorrow such as it was, show how it was right and amiable that I should feel it; and, in the position which they had assumed, they seemed to have the antidote against the mischief from the transfer of allegiance from one set of teachers to another, in representing themselves not as speaking their own words, but those of the holy mother of us all—the Church. So a strange process began to form; for, while it was in reality but their own great persons which were drawing us all towards them, they unwillingly deceived us into believing it was not their influence, but the body's power; and, while in fact we were only Newmanites, we fancied we were becoming Catholics.

Most mournful—for in the imagined security of our new position, as our minds were now unfolding, with deep faith in *one* great man, we began to follow him along the subtle reasonings with which he drew away from under us the supports upon which Protestant Christianity had been content to rest its weight; we allowed ourselves to see its contradictions, to recognise the logical strength of the arguments of Hume, to acknowledge that the old answers of Campbell, the evidences of Paley, were futile as the finger of a child on the spoke of an engine's driving-wheel; nay, more, to examine the logic of unbelief with a kind of pleasure, as hitting

our adversaries to the death, and never approaching us at all. So, gradually unknowing what we did, to accept the huge bisection of mankind; to confine Christianity to the Church visible, and exclude those beyond its pale from the blessings of the covenant—to recognise the Catholic illustration of the ark—to continue the anathemas of the creeds, while we determined the objects on whom they rested—to allow the world outside to have all talent, all splendour, power, beauty, intellect, superiority, even the highest heroic virtues, and yet to be without that peculiar goodness which flowed out of the body of which the elect were members, and which alone gave chance of salvation.

It is true that we were defrauded of the just indignation with which our hearts would have rebelled against so terrible a violation of their instincts, by mysterious hints of uncovenanted mercies, of grace given to the heathen in overflowing kindness; and gentle softening of the more consistent theology of the fathers, which flung infants, dying unbaptised, into the everlasting fire-lake. They would not let us see what they perhaps themselves shrunk from seeing, that in the law of Divine Providence there is none of this vague unreal trifling; that, if they believed their histories and their illustrations, they must not flinch from the conclusions. The sucking children of the unchosen were not saved in Noah's flood. The cities of the Canaanites were deluged with the blood of hundreds of thousands whose innocence appeals to outraged humanity. What had those



poor creatures done to justify their fate more than the Christians beyond the pale, or the heathen whose virtues plead to have intercession made for them?

The Catholics must not trifle with their theory, and on this twilight of uncovenanted mercies they must allow me to ask them these questions.

Was the Christian sacrifice necessary, or was it not? That is, could mankind be saved without it? You will answer, at least Catholics always do answer, They could not.

To derive the benefit of that sacrifice, is it necessary to be within the Church, and receive it through the sacraments? If Yes; then all beyond derive no benefit, and so are lost. If No; then what do you mean? There is no such thing as "partially necessary;" a thing is necessary or it is not. You will say then—Not necessary; but necessary in such and such circumstances—wherever God has made it possible. But if God had pleased it would have been universally possible; and with an attached natural penalty of eternal damnation, which can only be counteracted by a miracle, it is hard to conceive him leaving men without the one essential.

Well, then, do you mean these sacraments are essential to the living a saintly life? But others live saintly lives. If they do, you say that is by the extraordinary mercy. But the Catholics do not number a tithe of the human race—as a rule we do not find a larger proportion of good men among them than among others; and if, out of every age and nation, those who fear God are under the influ-



ence of His grace, and are in the other world to become members of His Church, a larger number by far will be taken from those beyond the pale than from within it; *and, therefore, the Catholics will receive by the extraordinary, the others by the ordinary channels.* The extra-sacramental is the common way; and how strange a system you make the Almighty to have constructed, when it does but answer a tenth of its purpose, and the rest is by method of exception. Surely this is worse than midsummer madness! The fathers are right—you are ridiculous. It may be that sacramental grace is essential; but the alternative is absolute—it is, or it is not. Begin to make exceptions; bend your line, here a little and there a little,—a curve for the pious Lutherans, an angle for the better sort of heathens,—and you will soon make your figure a helpless, shapeless no-figure. *Take up the swimmers into the ark,* and they will soon outnumber the good family there; and ark and all will go down, and you will have to take common chance in the water with the rest.

No! the earthly Canaan was given to the chosen people without respect of virtue, as Jewish history too painfully shows. So with your theory is the heavenly. You need not come in with your text, “Many shall come from the east and the west,” giving it the human sense, which shall save the heathens in the next world. For you it means, and but must mean, the call of the Gentiles under baptism. If you recoil from this conclusion, then, in God’s

name, have done with your covenant and your theory; and do not in the same breath allow and disallow human excellence as a title to heaven, or the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter must be called in to help you in your dividings.

A few words more shall be said to you, of which you shall not like the hearing. I will not prejudge you; but, if you believe what you say, to allow us to go on feeding ourselves upon the literature of those old glorious Greeks and Romans, to think by Aristotle and Cicero, to feel by Æschylus and Sophocles, to reproduce among ourselves by exclusive study the early figures of those great kings, patriots, poets, princes, is the most barbarous snare which was ever laid before the feet of weak humanity. And you do this—you who profess the care of our souls! Ah, if you did care for them, you would up and gird yourselves, and cry—Leave them, leave them, they are heathens! Learn your Greek in Athanasius, and your Latin in Augustine. Those were God's enemies whom He had not chosen, and therefore has rejected. The more dangerous because they look so like His friends; but splendid sinners, as the wise fathers called them.

What, gentlemen, do you suppose that I am to make friends with Socrates and Phocion, and believe that human nature is full of the devil, and that only baptism can give chance for a holy life? That I will hand Plato into destruction; that Sophocles, and Phidias, and Pindar, and Germanicus, and Tacitus, and Aurelius, and Trajan were no better than



poor unenlightened Pagans, and that, where you not only permit me to make acquaintance with them, but compel me to it as a condition, forsooth, under which I may become a minister of the Christian faith!

You think, perhaps, that I shall draw healthy comparisons, and see what heathenism could *not* make of man. That I will place (I will not compare invidiously)—that I will place David above Leonidas, Eusebius above Tacitus, Jerome over Plato, Aquinas over Aristotle, and yourselves over . . . . . Ah, Heaven! where shall I find an antitype of you? You shall let me see and love whole generations of men who would live long lives of self-denial and heroic daring, for the love of God, and virtue, and humanity; asking no reward but in the consciousness that they were doing God's will; and persevering still, even with the grave as the limit of their horizon, because they loved good and hated evil; and you point me out in contrast the noble army of martyrs—men who knew how to die in the strength of the faith, that death was the gate of eternal Paradise; and which is the noblest, and which is the hardest task, I wonder? No, the world is mystery enough, no doubt of that, and your Catholic Christianity *may* be true; but, if you think so, you, who are our soul's shepherds, at your peril be it, close up the literature of the world; like that deeply believing Caliph, close, close our eyes in seven-fold blindness against all history except the Bible history, and mark out the paths of Christian teaching



in which you will have us walk within walls hard and thick as the adamant round Paradise.

So much for the digressing upon an argument which I have let fall here where it is lying, not as what I felt at the time of which I speak, but as what now, as I look back over it, appears the logical account of the ill-satisfaction which I did feel. It is with argument as it is with the poetry of passion—we feel before we can speak of what we feel; and it is only on the return of calmness, when the struggle is past and the horizon clear again, that we can delineate and analyse our experiences.

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Among all the foolish and unmeaning cries over which party spirit has gone distracted, that of “private judgment” stands, perhaps, without parallel. Whether, as the Protestant explains it, we take it as a right, or as the Catholic, as a duty, the right of judging for oneself, or the right of choosing one’s teacher, or the duty of doing both, or one, or neither, whatever we call it, never was so strange a creature brought to birth out of our small but fertile imaginings.

What is right or duty without *power*? To tell a man it is his duty to submit his judgment to the judgment of the church, is like telling a wife it is her duty to love her husband—a thing easy to say, but meaning simply nothing. Affection must be won, not commanded. If the husband and wife

both continue the same persons as they were when they did love each other (supposing it was so), the love will continue; but if the natures change, either of both or one of them, and become antipathetic, it would be as reasonable to lecture oxygen and hydrogen on the duty of continuing in combination when they are decomposed by galvanism. They may, indeed, be forcibly held together in juxtaposition by external restraint; but combined they are not. And, while they are as they are, they cannot be combined.

So it is with the church and its members. As long as the church has the power to mould the minds of her children after her own sort, in such a way that their coherence in her shall be firm enough to overcome whatever external attraction they may fall within the sphere of, so long she has a right to their hearts. While she has the power to employ the external restraints of hope and fear—so long as she can torture and scourge, or so long as she directs public opinion, and her frown can entail any practical inconvenience—so long she has a right to the external conformity of such individuals as are of a kind to be governed by such considerations. As soon as she loses both, the bereaved lady may still cry, “I have a right to your affections, it is your duty to submit to me;” but she will have lost her divine sanction, and would be about as reasonable as the last of the Stuarts whining over his rights to the duty of the English.

Again, for an individual, be he who he will, in a



world where faculties are so unequally distributed, and some are weaker than others, to say he has a right to be his own teacher, or to choose who he will have for a teacher, is much as if a satellite of Jupiter betrayed a disposition to set up on his own account, or took a fancy to older ways and wished to transfer his allegiance to Saturn. If Saturn left his orbit, and came down for him, and by right of stronger attraction could take him away in a struggle, then of course he would have a right to him.

So it is with us all. I use magnetic illustrations, not because I think the mind magnetic, but because magnetic comparisons are the nearest we have, and the laws are exactly parallel. Minds vary in sensitiveness and in self-power, as bodies do in susceptibility of attraction and repulsion. When, when shall we learn that they are governed by laws as inexorable as physical laws, and that a man can as easily refuse to obey what has power over him as a steel atom can resist the magnet? Take a bar of steel, its component atoms cohere by attraction; turn off the current of electricity, or find means to negative it, and the bar becomes a dust heap. The earth's attraction calls off this portion, the wind scatters that, or another magnetic body in the neighbourhood will proceed to appropriate. So it is with belief: belief is the result of the proportion, whatever it be, in which the many elements which go to make the human being are combined. In some the grosser nature preponderates; they believe largely in their stomachs, in the comforts and conveniences



of life, and being of such kind, so long as these are not threatened, they gravitate steadily towards the earth. Numerically this is the largest class of believers, with very various denominations indeed; bearing the names of every faith beneath the sky, and composing the conservative elements in them, and therefore commonly persons of much weight in established systems. But they are what I have called them: their hearts are where I said they were, and as such interests are commonly selfish, and self separates instead of unites, they are not generally powerful against any heavy trial. Others of keener susceptibility are yet volatile, with slight power of continuance, and fly from attraction to attraction in the current of novelty. Others of stronger temper gravitate more slowly, but combine more firmly, and only disunite again when the idea or soul of the body into which they form dies out, or they fall under the influence of some very attractive force indeed. It may be doubted, indeed, whether a body which is really organised by a living idea, can lose a healthy member except by violence.

If it be difficult to follow the subtle features of electric affinity among the inorganic bodies or simplest elemental combinations, it may well be thought impossible in organisms so curiously complicated as that of the human being. However, such as it is, the illustration will serve.

The cry of private judgment meant simply this, that the authority of the office was ceasing to influ-

ence, and was being superseded by the authority of the gifted man—that the church had lost its power, perhaps its life, and was decomposing. The talk of the duty of determining to remain in her upon private judgment, was an attempt to inspire the atoms which were flying off with salutary fear of consequences, which would submit them again to her control.

Well, as we had none of us any very clear idea to magnetize us, and as yet had not approached the point when the other influences would come to bear upon us, and we should begin to feel the gravitation downwards in the necessity of getting on in the world, the leader of the movement took us all his own way; all that is who were not Arnoldized. And even some of these he contrived to draw away by the nearness and continuance of his action upon them, as the comet's attraction played the deuce with Jupiter's satellites while it continued in their neighbourhood. It is true we thought, yes, we thought we were following the church: but it was like the goose in the child's toy, which is led by the nose up and down the basin by the piece of bread . . . by the piece of bread . . . with the loadstone inside it.

Well, everybody remembers the history of the Tracts, and how the doctrine of development began to show itself as the idea grew; threatening such mighty changes; and how unsteady minds began to grow uneasy; and heads of houses to frown, and bishops to deliver charges. Hitherto these Tracts

had represented pretty exactly Anglican Oxford. Though dangerously clever, and more dangerously good, they had never broken bounds, and the unenthusiastic authorities had found themselves unable to do more than warn, and affect to moderate. The world outside seemed partially to smile on the movement, as at any rate a digging over an unproductive soil. Rome was never spoken of as the probable goal of any but a few foolish young men, whose presence would be injurious to any cause, and who were therefore better in the enemy's camp than at home. And no worldly interests had as yet been threatened with damage, except perhaps the Friday dinner and the Lent second course; the loss of which, being not enough to be painful, became a piquant stimulant, and gave edge to appetite.

Now, to a single-minded man, who is either brave enough or reckless enough to surrender himself wholly to one idea, and look neither right nor left, but only forward, what earthly consequences may follow is not material. Persecution strengthens him; and so he is sure he is right, whether his course end in a prison or on a throne is no matter at all. But men of this calibre are uncommon in any age or in any country—very uncommon in this age and this country. Most of us are sent to universities or wherever it may be, not merely to be educated into men, but to get along in the world; make money, it may be called, in an invidious way; but it is not only to make money; it is that we may take up our own position in life, and support



ourselves in the scale of society where we were born. We are placed in a road along which we have only to travel steadily, and the professions, as they are called, are trodden in by the experience of the common sense of mankind, making large advance and best success quite possible to average hack genius, which would make nothing of its across country. The world cares little about theology; and the worldly professions soon leave it out of account except on Sunday . . . . But to the Oxford students, and particularly to such of them as form the opinion of Oxford, theology is itself the profession. Chosen as a profession, it is followed with professional aims, and, as the idea of the Tracts grew clearer and more exclusive, the time came when the angle at which the line of *its* course inclined towards the professional influence became obtuse instead of acute, and this last began to retard.

It became necessary to surrender tutorships, fellowships, and the hopes of them; to find difficulties in getting ordained, to lose slowly the prospects of pleasant curacies, and livings, and parsonage houses, and the sweet little visions of home paradises—a serious thing to young high churchmen, who were commonly of the amiable enthusiastic sort, and so, of course, had fallen most of them into early engagements . . . . . and from this time the leader's followers began to lag behind. "They turned back, and walked no more after him." I am not blaming them. They did not know what was governing them, and, if they

did, they would have had very much to urge for themselves. It is no light thing this mortifying the hopes of friends, who have, perhaps, made painful sacrifices to lift us forward. It is no light thing to encounter the hard words and hard facts of life, without sympathy, till the cause is won and it is not needed; rather perhaps with the coldness of those we love, the sneers of society, the three meals a-day never slacking their claims, and the where-withal to provide them poorly forthcoming.

The idea drives a man into the wilderness before he comes to the land of milk and honey . . . . . and little water and the scanty sprinkling of angel's food he must make shift to be content with. Speculation bakes no bread, and often, too, the sinking heart flags and fails to trust itself, and the moments of insight are short, and the hours of despondency are long, and the unsteady reason rises among vague misgivings, and points reproachfully back to the fleshpots of Egypt, which we have left to die in the desert. After all, too, is not the beaten road, a road which *men* have beaten, good men who had God's grace in them. Surely what presumption is it not for here and there a self-wise impertinent to refuse to listen to the old practised guides, and fly off, he knows not where, after a mirage he calls an "*idea*." . . . Peace, peace, perturbed spirits! Perfection in this world is a dream. . . . . Poor sheep! listen to the call of your shepherd; turn back before the sand overwhelm you . . . . . So reason with themselves the many half-worshippers of truth; and



they turn back and find their account in turning. They find their account in the peace they sought. Genius only has a right to choose its own way, for genius only has the power to face what it will find there. There is a lion in the path . . . . let the common man keep clear of him. So all men gravitate into their spheres; only wo to those who swing suspended in the balance, and can follow heartily neither earth nor heaven.

There is genius with its pale face and worn dress and torn friendships and bleeding heart . . . strong only in struggling; counting all loss but truth and the love of God; rewarded, as men court reward, perhaps by an after apotheosis, yet never seeking this reward or that reward, save only its own good conscience steady to its aim; promising nothing; least of all peace—only struggles which are to end but with the grave.

And there is respectability, with its sweet smiling home, and loving friends, and happy family, a fair green spring, a golden summer, an autumn sinking fruit-loaded to the earth—the final winter rest following on the full finished course of gentle duty done, and for the future prospects, easy and secure. Choose between them, O man, at the parting of the ways! Choose. You may have one; both you cannot have. Either will give you to yourself—either *perhaps* to God. Yet, if you do choose the first, choose it with all your heart. You will need it all to bear what will be laid upon you. No wistful lookings back upon the pleasant land which you



are leaving—no playing with life. You have chosen the heart of things, not the surface; and it is no child's play. Fling away your soul once for all, your own small self; if you will find it again. Count not even on immortality. St Paul would make himself anathema for the brethren. Look not to have your sepulchre built in after ages by the same foolish hands which still ever destroy the living prophet. Small honour for you if they do build it; and may be they never will build it. A thousand patriots go to the scaffold amidst the execrations of decent mankind. Out of these thousand, perhaps the after generation remembers one young Emmett; and his name finds honourable memory; and young ladies drop sentimental tears on the piano notes as they sing the sorrows of his broken-hearted bride.

Enough of this . . . . But once in our lives we have all to choose. More or less we have all felt once the same emotions. We have not always been what the professions make of us. Nature made us men, and she surrenders not her children without a struggle. I will go back to my story now with but this one word, that it is these sons of genius, and the fate they meet with, which is to me the one sole evidence that there is more in "this huge state" than what is seen, and that in very truth the soul of man is not a thing which comes and goes, is builded and decays like the elemental frame in which it is set to dwell, but a very living force,

a very energy of God's organic Will, which rules and moulds this universe.

For what are they? Say not, say not, it is but a choice which they have made; and an immortality of glory in heaven shall reward them for what they have sacrificed on earth. It may be so; but they do not ask for it. They are what they are from the Divine power which is in them, and you would never hear their complainings if the grave was the gate of annihilation.

Say not they have their reward on earth in the calm satisfaction of noble desires, nobly gratified, in the sense of great works greatly done; that too may be, but neither do they ask for that. They alone never remember themselves; they know no end but to do the will which beats in their heart's deep pulses. Ay, but for these, these few martyred heroes, it might be after all that the earth was but a huge loss-and-profit ledger book; or a toy machine some great angel had invented for the amusement of his nursery; and the storm and the sunshine but the tears and the smiles of laughter in which he and his baby cherubs dressed their faces over the grave and solemn airs of slow-paced respectability.

Yes, genius alone is the Redeemer; it bears our sorrows, it is crowned with thorns for us; the children of genius are the church militant, the army of the human race. Genius is the life, the law of mankind, itself perishing, that others may take possession

and enjoy. Religion, freedom, science, law, the arts, mechanical or beautiful, all which gives *respectability* a chance, have been moulded out by the toil and the sweat and the blood of the faithful; who, knowing no enjoyment, were content to be the servants of their own born slaves, and wrought out the happiness of the world which despised and disowned them.

So much for the sons of genius . . . one of whom—perhaps one of three or four at present alive in this planet—was at that time rising up in Oxford, and drawing all men towards him. I myself was so far fortunate, that the worldly influence of which I spoke did not so immediately bear upon me. I was, as the phrase goes, moderately provided for; and, in my own reflectings upon the matter, it seemed to me that I in a way *ought* to take advantage of a fortunate position; and, without judging the motives of others who acted differently because I could not tell how I myself might have acted if I had been tempted in the same way, to follow on where the direct course seemed to lead me.

Life complete, is lived in two worlds; the one inside, and the one outside. The first half of our days is spent wholly in the former; the second, if it is what it ought to be, wholly in the latter—Pretty well till we have done with our educating theories are only words to us, and church controversy not of things but of shadows of things. Through all that time life and thought beyond our own experience is but a great game played out by book actors; we do not



think, we only think we think, and we have been too busy in our own line to have a notion really of what is beyond it. But while so much of our talk is so unreal, our own selves, our own risings, fallings, aspirings, resolutions, misgivings, these are real enough to us; these are our hidden life, our sanctuary of our own mysteries. . . . . It was into these that N.'s power of insight was so remarkable. I believe no young man ever heard him preach without fancying that some one had been betraying his own history, and the sermon was aimed specially at him. It was likely that, while he had possession so complete of what we did know about ourselves, we should take his word for what we did not; and, while he could explain *us*, let him explain the rest for us. But it is a problem heavier than has been yet laid on theologians to make what the world has now grown into square with the theory of catholicism. And presently as we began to leave the nest, and, though under his eye, fly out and look about for ourselves, some of us began to find it so. I was not yet acquainted with any of the modern continental writers, but I had read a great deal of English, and clouds of things began to rise before me in lights wonderfully different from those in which I used to see them. I will not go along the details, but I will lay down a few propositions, all of which were granted, with the conclusions I myself was tempted to draw, and those which I was taught to draw.

1. That, if the Catholic theory be true, it is not only necessary to *talk* of hating the Reformation, but

one must hate it with a hearty good-will as a rending of the body of Christ . . . . . and yet . . . . .

That in the sixteenth century the church was full of the most fearful abuses; that many of the clergy were unbelievers, and many more worldly and sensual; that to what we call an honest simple understanding, it had become a huge system of fraud, trickery, and imposture. Granted.

2. That the after Reformation in the *Roman* Catholic church was, humanly speaking, a consequence of the great revolt from her, which had shamed her into exerting herself. Granted.

3. That, ever since, the nations which have remained Catholic have become comparatively powerless, while the Protestant nations have uniformly risen; that each nation, in fact, has risen exactly as it has emancipated itself. Granted.

4. That the Catholic church since the Reformation has produced no great man of science, no statesman, no philosopher, no poet. Granted.

5. That historical criticism, that scientific discovery *have uniformly tended to invalidate* the authority of histories to which the infallible church has committed herself. Granted.

6. That the personal character of the people in all Roman Catholic countries is poor and mean; that they are untrue in their words, unsteady in their actions, disrespecting themselves in the entire tenor of their life and temper. Granted.

7. And that this was to be traced to the moral dependence in which they were trained; to the con-



science being taken out of their own hands and deposited with the priests; to the disrespect with which this life is treated by the Catholic theory; the low esteem in which the human will and character are considered; and, generally, to the condition of spiritual bondage in which they are held. Not granted, but to be believed nevertheless.

Now if these things were facts, taken alone at least, they were unquestionably serious. Happily I had very early learned the fallacy of building much on logic and verbal argument. Single sets of truths I knew to be as little conclusive in theology as in physics; and, in one as in the other, no theory to be worth anything, however plausibly backed up with Scripture texts or facts, which was not gathered *bonâ fide* from the analysis of all the attainable phenomena, and verified wherever possible by experiment. "Here is a theory of the world which you bring for my acceptance: well, there is the world; try—will the key fit? can you read the language into sense by it?" was the only method; and so I was led always to look at broad results, at pages and chapters, rather than at single words and sentences, where for a few lines a false key may serve to make a meaning. . . . . So of these broad observations I only expected a broad solution. I did not draw conclusions for myself, I never yet doubted; but I wished to be told what I was to make of facts so startling.

These answers which follow I do not mean to say were given categorically to categorically asked ques-



tions, but on the whole they are such as were in various ways and at considerable intervals of time suggested to me.

1. Either it was true or it was not true, that man was fallen and required redemption; that from the beginning of time a peculiar body of people, *not specially distinguished for individual excellencies*, had nevertheless been the objects of peculiar care, the channels of peculiar grace; that their language was inspired, their priests divinely guided.

2. If this was true, we were not to demand at present results which never had been found.

3. That the Spirit worked not visibly, but invisibly.

4. That my arguments told not only against Catholicism, *but against Christianity, considered as historical and exclusive.*

5. That Protestant Christianity on the Continent had uniformly developed into Socinianism, and thence into Pantheism, and from a fact was becoming an idea merely.

6. That Catholicism altogether was a preternatural system, treating the world as a place of trial and temptation, and the Devil as the main director of what seemed greatest and most powerful in it; and, therefore, that we should least look among Christians for such power and greatness; and broken-hearted penitence was not likely to produce such effects as seemed to me so admirable.

7. The Bible everywhere denounced the world as the enemy of God, not as the friend of God; and by

the world must be meant the real world of fact, not a fantastic world of all kinds of vice and wickedness, which had no existence beyond our own imaginings. The world was always what the world is now—a world of greatness as well as pleasure—of intellect, power, beauty, nobleness. This was the world we forswore in baptism, and in our creed denounced. The temper of a saint was quite different from the temper of a world's great man; and we had no right, because we found this last attractive and beautiful, to assume that he was not therefore what the Bible warned us against. If man is fallen, his un-sanctified virtues are vices.

9. That the hold of Christianity was on the heart, and not on the reason. Reason was not the whole of us; and alone it must ever lead to infidelity.

10. Finally, we were Christians, or we were not. Confessedly Christianity was mysterious; the mysterious solution of a mysterious world; not likely to be reasonable. If once we began accommodating and assimilating, shrinking from that difficulty, and stretching our creed to this, expanding liberalism would grow stronger by concessions. The Bible warned us sternly enough of what we were, and of the little right we had to place confidence in ourselves. Unbelief was a sin, not a mistake, and deserved not argument, but punishment.

It was enough for me to learn, as now I soon did, that all real arguments against Catholicism were, in fact, arguments against Christianity; and I was readily induced to acknowledge that the Reforma-



tion had been the most miserable infatuation. The world was an enemy dangerous enough without home feuds; and the Reformers, in allowing reason to sit in judgment in matters of faith, in appealing to common sense, and in acknowledging the right of personal independence, were introducing elements, no one of which could produce anything but falsehood, in a system which recognised none of them, which was divine, not human, and, being divinely founded, had the promise of divine sustaining. I saw that in denying the continual authority of the Church's witness, and falling back on individual experience, or historic testimony, they had, in fact, cut away the only support on which Revelation could at all sustain itself. That in the cry of "the Bible, and the Bible only" (setting aside the absurdity of the very idea, as if the Bible was not written in human language, and language not dependent for interpretation upon tradition; I say, setting aside this), men are assuming the very point at issue; for, if the Church was mistaken, why must the Bible be true? That is, why must it be wholly true? why not contain the same alloy of true and false to be found in all other books?

In fact, they had cut the roots of the tree; for a few years it might retain some traces of its old life; but they had broken off the supply, and they were but trading on what was left of the traditionary reverence for the Bible which the Church had instilled into mankind. Experience had shown, that the same reason which rejected the Saints' miracles



as incredible would soon make hard mouths at the Bible miracles. The notion of inspiration was no more satisfactory than that of the Church's infallibility; and if the power of the keys, and sacramental grace, and apostolic succession, were absurdities, the Devil was at least equally so. And with the Devil fell sin, and the atonement fell, and all revelation fell; and we were drifting on the current of a wide ocean, we knew not where, with neither oar nor compass.

And so I held on, with all my heart, in the power of old association; and, clinging fast to what I could comprehend of our leader's views, for a time dreamed they were my own. Hitherto, in considering the existing unhappy state of Catholic countries, England, unquestionably the strongest country in the world, we had taken as a Protestant country. The tendency of Catholicism we saw to be to depress the external character of man; that, the deeper he believed it, the more completely he became subdued. Protestantism, on the contrary, cultivated man outwards on every side, insisted on self-reliance, taught every one to stand alone, and depend himself on his own energies. Now, then, came the question of the Church of England—was it Catholic, was it Protestant? for, if this were Protestantism, surely the English, as a nation, were the most Protestant in the world. Long before the Reformation, the genius of independence had begun to struggle for emancipation among them, and the dazzling burst of the Elizabethan era was the vigorous expansion of long-imprisoned energy, spring-

ing out in bounding joyous freedom. The poets, from Chaucer to Milton, were, without exception, on the reforming side; and the strong practical heart of the country found its fullest and clearest expression in Oliver Cromwell. Unquestionably the English were Protestants in the fullest sense of the word; yet, in spite of this unhealthy symptom, the English Church had retained, apparently providentially, something of a Catholic character. It had retained the Succession, it had retained the Sacraments, it had retained Liturgical forms, which committed it to the just Catholic understanding of them. The question with the Tract writers was, whether, with the help of this old framework they could unprotestantize its working character, and reinspire it with so much of the old life as should enable it to do the same work in England which the Roman Church produced abroad; to make England cease to produce great men—as we count greatness—and for poetry, courage, daring, enterprise, resolution, and broad honest understanding, substitute devotion, endurance, humility, self-denial, sanctity, and faith. This was the question at issue. It might take other names; it might resent the seeing itself represented so broadly. But this was, at heart, what it meant, if it meant anything—to produce a wholly different type of character. It was no longer now a nice dispute about authority. Long-sighted men saw now that Christianity itself had to fight for its life, and that, unless it was very soon to die in England, as it had died in Germany and France, something



else than the broad solid English sense must be inoculated into the hearts of us. We were all liberalizing as we were going on, making too much of this world, and losing our hold upon the next; forgetting, as we all had, that the next was the only real world, and this but a thorny road to it, to be trod with bleeding feet, and broken spirits. It was high time.

What a sight must this age of ours have been to an earnest believing man like Newman, who had an eye to see it, and an ear to hear its voices? A foolish Church, chattering, parrot-like, old notes, of which it had forgot the meaning; a clergy who not only thought not at all, but whose heavy ignorance, from long unreality, clung about them like a garment, and who mistook their fool's cap and bells for a crown of wisdom, and the music of the spheres; selfishness alike recognized practically as the rule of conduct, and faith in God, in man, in virtue, exchanged for faith in the belly, in fortunes, carriages, lazy sofas, and cushioned pews; Bentham politics, and Paley religion; all the thought deserving to be called thought, the flowing tide of Germany, and the philosophy of Hume and Gibbon; all the spiritual feeling, the light froth of the Wesleyans and Evangelicals; and the only real stern life to be found anywhere, in a strong resolved and haughty democratic independence, heaving and rolling underneath the chaff-spread surface. How was it like to fare with the clergy gentlemen, and the Church turned respectable, in the struggle with



enemies like these? Erastianism, pluralities, prebendal stalls, and pony-gigging parsons,—what work were they like to make against the proud, rugged, intellectual republicanism, with a fire sword between its lips, bidding cant and lies be still; and philosophy, with Niebuhr criticism for a reaping sickle, mowing down their darling story-books? High time it was to move indeed. High time for the Church warriors to look about them, to burnish up their armour, to seize what ground was yet remaining, what time to train for the battle.

It would not serve to cultivate the intellect. All over Europe, since Spinoza wrote, what of strongest intellect there was had gone over to the enemy. Genius was choosing its own way, acknowledging no longer the authority either of man or document; and unless in some way or other the heart could be preoccupied—unless the Church could win back the love of her children, and temper them quite differently from the tone in which they were now tempered, the cause was lost—and for ever. So, then, they must begin with the clergy. To wean the Church from its Erastianism into militancy, where it might at least command respect for its sincerity—to wean the bishops from their palaces and lazy carriages and fashionable families, the clergy from their snug firesides and marrying and giving in marriage: this was the first step. Slowly then to draw the people out of the whirl of business to thought upon themselves—from self-assertion, for the clamouring for their rights, and

the craving for independence, to almsgiving, to endurance of wrong, to the confessional—from doing to praying—from early hours in the office, or in the field, to matins and daily service: this was the purpose of the Tract movement. God knows, if Christianity be true, a purpose needful enough to get fulfilled. For surely it is madness, if the world be the awful place the Bible says it is, the Devil's kingdom—the battle-field between good and evil spirits for the eternal happiness or eternal perdition of human souls—to go out, as we all do, clergy and all of us—to go out into its highways and dust our feet along its thoroughfares; to take part in its amusements; to eat, and drink, and labour, and enjoy our labour's fruit, and find our home and happiness here. Madness! yes, and far worse than madness! For once more, the world is not visibly at least the hideous place our early religion dreams it to be; it is not a world of profligates and pick-pockets, and thieves and sensualists; it is a world of men and women, not all good, but better far than bad; a world of virtue as man's heart deems virtue; of human feelings, sympathies, and kindness; a world we cannot enter into without loving it . . . . and yet, if we love it, we are to die.

Oh, most miserable example of disbelief in their own precepts are the English clergy! Denouncing the world, they yet live in it; speaking in the old language against indulgence, and luxury, and riches, and vanity in the pulpit, how is it that they cannot bring themselves, neither they nor their families, to



descend from the social position, as they call it, in which they were born? Why must they be for ever gentlemen? Why is it that the only unworldliness to be found among them is but among those to whom poverty leaves no alternative?

It was a worldly Church; yes, there was no doubt of it; and, being so, it early began to scent danger, to cry out and anathematize the new teachers who prescribed a severer doctrine; who were trying to shame the clergy into a more consistent life by reminding them of the dignity of their office. Newman had dared to tell them that their armour was pasteboard; the oil dying out of their lamps; that a tempest was rising which would scatter them like chaff before it. Catholic feeling—Catholic energy—Catholic doctrine, exhibited in holy life, in prayer, and fasting, their own witness at least of their own fidelity, might save them. It was a chance, only a chance: but their last. Let them rouse themselves, and see what they did really believe, and why they believed; above all, let them come forward in deed as well as word, and prove that they were alive: with a faith really heart-rooted, they might yet stand in the storm; but their logic props were bruised reeds indeed. . . . . And what was his reward? He was denounced as a Cassandra prophet; bid, go get him gone, shake the dust from off his feet, and depart to his own place. He took them at their word, and left the falling house, not without scorn. A little more slumber, a little more sleep. It was the sluggard's cry, let them find the sluggard's



doom. But I had left him, too, before this. I have outrun my own small history, and I must fall back upon my own adventures. He was not the only greatly gifted man then living in this England. I think he was one of two. Another eye, deep-piercing as his, and with a no less wide horizon, was looking out across the same perplexed scene, and asking his heart, too, what God would tell him of it. Some one says that the accident of a ten years' earlier or later birth into this world may determine the whole direction and meaning of the most powerful of minds. The accident of local circumstances may produce the same result. Men form their texture out of the atmosphere which they inhale, and incline this way or that way as the current of the wind in which they stand. Newman grew up in Oxford, in lectures, and college chapels, and school divinity; Mr. Carlyle, in the Scotch Highlands, and the poetry of Goëthe. I shall not in this place attempt to acknowledge all I owe to this very great man; but, about three years before Newman's secession, chance threw in my way the "History of the French Revolution." I shall but caricature my feelings if I attempt to express them; and, therefore, I will only say that for the first time now it was brought home to me, that two men may be as sincere, as earnest, as faithful, as uncompromising, and yet hold opinions far asunder as the poles. I have before said that I think the moment of this conviction is the most perilous crisis of our lives; for myself, it threw me at once on my own

responsibility, and obliged me to look for myself at what men said, instead of simply accepting all because they said it. I began to look about me to listen to what had to be said on many sides of the question, and try, as far as I could, to give it all fair hearing.

Newman talked much to us of the surrender of reason. Reason, first of every thing, must be swept away, so daily more and more unreasonable appeared to modern eyes so many of the doctrines to which the Church was committed. As I began to look into what he said about it, the more difficult it seemed to me. What did it mean? Reason could only be surrendered by an act of reason. Even the Church's infallible judgments could only be received through the senses, and apprehended by reason; why, if reason was a false guide, should we trust one act of it more than another? Fall back on human faculty somewhere we must, and how could a superstructure stone be raised on a chaff foundation? While I was perplexing myself about this, there came a sermon from him in St. Mary's, once much spoken of, containing a celebrated sentence. The sermon is that on the development of religious doctrine—the sentence is this: "Scripture says the earth is stationary and the sun moves; science, that the sun is stationary and that the earth moves." For a moment it seemed as if every one present heard, in those words, the very thing they had all wished for and had long waited for—the final mesothesis for the reconciling the two great



rivals, Science and Revelation ; and yet it was that sentence which at once cleared up my doubts the other way, and finally destroyed the faith I had in Newman, after "Tract 90" had shaken it. For to what conclusions will it drive us? If Scripture does not use the word "motion" in the sense in which common writers use it, it uses it in some transcendental sense by hypothesis beyond our knowledge. Therefore Scripture tells us nothing except what may be a metaphysical unattainable truth. But if Scripture uses one word in such sense without giving us warning, why not more words?—Why not every word and every sentence? And Scripture, instead of a revelation, becomes a huge mysterious combination of one knows not what; and, what is worse, seeming all the while to have a plain and easy meaning constructed purposely to lead us astray. The very thing which Des Cartes, at the outset of his philosophy, thought it necessary to examine the probability of, whether, that is, *Deus quidam deceptor existat*, who can intentionally deceive us. Nor is the difficulty solved in the very least by the theory of an infallible interpretation of Scripture. For, by hypothesis, the interpretations are by the Holy Spirit; the same spirit which has played one such strange trick, and may therefore do it again; nay, is most likely to do it again and again.

This is carrying out the renunciation of the reason with a vengeance. Perhaps it is consistent, the legitimate development of the idea; the position



which all defenders of Bible infallibility must at last be driven to assume. Deepest credulity and deepest scepticism have been commonly believed to be near neighbours; but we have but to state it in its nakedness, and the strain so long drawn by the mystery of revelation upon submission and distrust of our own ignorance is overdrawn at last. . . . . We may not know much, but we know enough to feel that, if mankind were compelled to accept a doctrine so monstrous, suicide and madness would speedily make empty benches in the Church Catholic.

No; once for all, I felt this could not be. If there were no other way to save Scripture than this, then, in the name of plain sense and honesty, let Scripture go. Yet, here we had been brought at last, amidst the noise and clatter of tongues, and that by a man who had the deepest moral insight into the human heart, and the keenest of logical intellects. It was enough to shake our confidence in our own reason that his reason could accept and be satisfied by such a theory; and certainly, let passion adopt what view it will, that treacherous wit of ours will contrive to make a case for it.

Here it was at any rate that I finally cast off. Farther along that track I would not go. I could not then see the full force of the alternative, and the compelling causes which were urging him. I could not believe all was indeed so utterly at stake. I would try for myself. He went on to the end—to the haven where sooner or later it was now clear he must anchor at last. The arguments for the Ca-

tholicity of the English church continued the same, but he on whom they were to tell was changed. He might have borne her supineness if he could have found the life in her for which he thirsted; but, as his desires deepened with his advances in the real feeling of Christianity, it was natural that his heart should incline where he could find them most fully gratified.

If there be any such thing as sin, in proportion to the depth with which men feel it, they will gravitate towards Rome.

If it be true that the souls even of holy men are as continually contracting infirmity as their bodies are; if absolution is as constantly necessary for the one as ablution is for the other; as men of cleanly habits of body are more sensitive to the most trifling dirt spot, so men of sensitive consciences are miserable under taints upon a surface which to a vulgar eye seems pure as snow . . . . add to this the conviction that the priest's voice and hand alone can dispense the purifying stream; and beyond question, where the fountain runs the fullest, thither they will seek to go.

And sin with Newman was real; not a misfortune to be pitied and allowed for; to be talked of gravely in the pulpit, and forgotten when out of it; not a thing to be sentimentally sighed over at the evening tea-party, with complacent feeling that we were pleasing Heaven by calling ourselves children of hell, but in very truth a dreadful monster, a real child of a real devil, so dreadful that at its first



appearance among mankind it had convulsed the infinite universe, and that nothing less than a sacrifice, so tremendous that the mind sinks crushed before the contemplation of it, could restore the deranged balance. Unreasonable as it seemed, he really believed this; and, given such an element among us as this, one may well give over hope of finding truth by reasonable analysis and examination of evidence. One must go with what haste one can to the system which best understands this monster sin, which is best provided with remedies and arms against it. To the dry mathematicizing reason, the Catholic, the Anglo-Catholic, the Lutheran, Calvinist, the Socinian, will be equally unacceptable; and the philosopher will somewhat contemptuously decline giving either of them the intellectual advantage. But sin is of faith, not of mathematics. And a real human heart, strong enough and deep enough to see it and feel it in its enormity, will surely choose from among the various religions that one where the sacraments are most numerous and most constant, and absolution is more than a name, and confession is possible without episcopal interdictings.

For myself I fell off; not because I had determined not to follow, but because I had not yet felt this intensity of hunger and of thirst which could drive me to accept the alternative, and consent to so entire an abandonment of myself. I had learnt enough of the reality and awfulness of human life



not to play with it; and I shrunk before what at least might be a sin against my own soul.

My eyes were opening slowly to see for myself the strangeness of this being of ours. I had flung myself off into space, and seen this little earth ball careering through its depths; this miserable ball, not a sand grain in the huge universe of suns, and yet to which such a strangely mysterious destiny was said to have been attached. I had said to myself, Can it be that God, Almighty God, He, the Creator himself, went down and took the form of one of those miserable insects crawling on its surface, and died Himself to save their souls? I had asked the question. Did ever man ask it honestly, and answer *yes*? Many men have asked it with a foregone conclusion; but that is not to ask it. I say, did ever man who doubted, find his own heart give him back the Church's answer?

I know not. I answered nothing; but I went down again upon my old earth home; and, with no anxiety for claiming any so high kindred for my race, I felt myself one among them; I felt that they were my brothers, and among them my lot was cast. I could not wish them to be children of heaven; neither could I make away their weaker ones to hell; they were all my fellows; I could feel with them all, and love them all. For me this world was neither so high nor so low as the Church would have it; chequered over with its wild light shadows, I could love it and all the chil-

dren of it, more dearly, perhaps, because it was not all light. "These many men so beautiful," they should be neither God's children nor the Devil's children, but children of men.

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Here ends this manuscript, abruptly. I know not what others may think of it . . . . To me, at least, as I read it, it seemed as if my friend were working round, slowly perhaps, but surely, to a stronger and more real grasp of life; and, if he could only have been permitted some few months or years of further silent communing with himself, the reeling rocking body might have steadied into a more constant motion. But unhappily the trials of life will not wait for us. They come at their own time, not caring much to inquire how ready we may be to meet them . . . . and we little know what we are doing when we cast adrift from system. "How is it," said Martin Luther's wife to him, "that in the old Church we used to pray so often and so earnestly, and now we can but mutter a few words a poor once a day, with hearts far enough away" . . . . Even superstition is a bracing girdle, which the frame that is trained to it can ill afford to lose.

Markham was beginning to find a happiness to which he had been long a stranger. With his books and his pen he was making a kind of employment for himself; and, better perhaps than this, he was employing a knowledge of medicine, which at one time he had studied more than superficially,

much to the advantage of many peasant families, with which he made acquaintance in his rambles. In this way passed along the winter. He had rooms in a small cottage close to the water; and with the help of a little skiff he had made for himself, as the spring came on, and the sky and the earth put on their beauty again, the fair shores of the lovely lake unfolded all their treasures to him, and reproached him into peace. . . . A dreamer he was, and ever would be. Yet dreaming need not injure us, if it do but take its turn with waking; and even dreams themselves may be turned to beauty, by favoured men to whom nature has given the powers of casting them into form. "The accomplishment of verse" had not been granted to Markham; but music was able to do for him what language could not, and the flute obeyed him as its master. Many an evening the peasants wandering homewards along the shore had stood still to listen to sounds rising from the water which they little thought were caused by English breath; and the nightingales took their turn to listen to notes as sweet and more varied than their own. After all, it is no sign of ill health of mind, this power of self-surrender to the emotions which nature breathes upon us. We are like the wind harp under the summer breeze, and we may almost test how far our spirits are in tune with hers by the vagrant voices they send forth as she sweeps across their strings.

One evening late in May he was drifting lan-



guidly down the little bay which lay before his window; the faintest air was slowly fanning him towards the land; it was too faint even to curl the dreamy surface of the lake; only it served to catch the notes which were rising from off his flute and bear them in fuller sweetness over the few hundred yards of water to the shore. He had been lying in this way an hour perhaps or more, playing as the feeling rose, or pausing to watch the gold and crimson fading from off the sky, and the mellow planets streaming out with their double image in the air and in the lake. His boat drifting against the shore warned him at last to rise; he sprung out, and drew it up beyond danger of the waves, and then for the first time observed that he had another listener besides the nightingales. A lady was sitting on the grass bank immediately behind where he was standing. It was too dark to let him see her face; but, as she rose hastily, he perceived that she was young and her figure very elegant; and it struck him that there was something English about it. He took his hat off as he made way for her to pass him, and something seemed to pass between her lips, as if her involuntary admiration was melting into a half-conscious acknowledgment. He returned home, and the next evening, on coming in from a walk, he found on his table the card of a Mr. Leonard. He was the husband of the lady. She had sent him, it appeared, to make the acquaintance of a countryman whom she had recognized by the old English airs.

Mr. Leonard was an easy, good-natured, not very sensible English country gentleman, whose fortune more than whose person had some years before induced a certain noble family at home to dispose of an encumbrance to him . . . . in the form of a distantly related young lady who had been thrown upon them for support. She only knowing neglect where she was, and what of duty she had ever been taught being the duty simply of marrying well and early to gain an independent position, had no courage, perhaps no wish, to decline Mr. Leonard's proposals. Her personal beauty had been his attraction. She had married him, and ever since had been tolerating a sort of inert existence, which she did not know to be a wretched one, only because her heart was still in its chrysalis, and she had never experienced another. It could not have been with any active pleasure that she found herself chained for a life to a person she was obliged to struggle not to despise, and glimpses now and then of some higher state would flash across her like a pang of remorse . . . . but, rare and fleeting as they were, they had passed by her like the strange misgivings which from time to time flit about us all of some other second life we have lived we know not where, and had happily been without the power to wake her out of her apathetic endurance. The Leonards had gone to Italy, as English people do go there; she had longed to be taken there, because it was the land of art and poetry, and music and old associations—the land of romance and loveliest na-



ture ; he, because it was the right thing to have been there ; because it would please his wife ; and because he was promised a variety in the sporting amusements which were his only pleasure.

Ah ! if those good world educators, who in early life crush the young shootings of the heart, and blight its growth in their pestilential atmosphere, would but innaturate it with their poison and make it barren for ever ! how many a crime, as they are pleased to call it, would be spared . . . . But they only half do their work ; they cut off the fruit, but they leave the life remaining ; to wake at enmity with all it finds, and to speak only to betray. The Leonards were to go to Rome in the winter ; but for the hot months, as the style of friends whom he liked best to visit were not the sort which best suited her, and as she found the shores of an Italian lake a more agreeable retiring place, they came to a kind of a compromise. He took a villa near Como, which she and her young child were to make their home ; while he, who had many acquaintances, received a dispensation from constant attendance, and was allowed to relieve the monotony by frequent absence, leaving her in a solitude which, if the truth must be told, was more agreeable than his society, and only coming back to her now and then for a week at a time. He liked her very well, but a longer tête-a-tête after four years of marriage fatigued him. It was at one of these angel visits that she had seen Markham. They inquired who he was, and were told he was an Englishman, and



out of health. She had learned something more of him in that evening music, which told her he was not a common Englishman; and Leonard, who had a theory of race, and believed with all his heart in the absolute virtue of everything English, was very happy to call upon him. The visit was returned. Markham was not quite a model Saxon, and illness too was a drawbrack, a certain rude health being part of the national idea; but Leonard liked him well enough to make this week a fortnight; and, at the end of it, their new friend had become so intimate with them, that under plea of his requiring attendance, and with the excuse that they had found out a number of common acquaintances at home which in Italy made them seem almost to have claims upon one another, they had begged him to leave his lodgings and make their house his home.

It was the very thing for Leonard. He had an excuse now for going away; while before he had felt some compunction at leaving his wife so much alone, however poor a companion he felt he could be for her. But a nice pleasant fellow who played the flute and talked poetry would far more than supply his absence; and, with the honest English confidence which is almost stupidity, he rejoiced for his lady's sake at the friend which had been found for her, and now stayed away as he pleased without care or anxiety.

Women's eyes are rapid in detecting a heart which is ill at ease with itself, and, knowing the value of

sympathy, and finding their own greatest happiness not in receiving it, but in giving it, with them to be unhappy is at once to be interesting. They never ask for others' sympathy with them; they do not recognise their own troubles as of enough importance to any but themselves. But instinct teaches them their power; they know what they can be to others: they feel their gentle calling and they follow it. . . . It is curious too, whether it be that people always admire most in others what they have the least in themselves—whatever be the reason—there is no kind of suffering in which they take warmer interest, than the heart's sufferings over intellectual perplexities. Many women have died of broken hearts, but no woman's heart ever broke in such a trial . . . yet it is just those into which they are the least able to enter, that they seem most to sympathise in. Whether it be that such a case is a rare exchange from the vulgar personal anxieties of common people, and they know that only a generous heart can feel deeply on a question in which all the world have as deep a stake as itself; whether, the danger being said to be so great, a sceptic seems brave and noble to risk it for the love of truth—I cannot tell why it is, but I think no more dangerous person than Markham could have been thrown in the way of Mrs. Leonard. His conversation was so unlike any she had ever heard before; his manner was so gentle; his disinterestedness in sacrificing his home, his friends, his fortune, as it seemed to her, was so truly heroic—that he almost appeared like a being of another



world to her; and, long before she had dared to think that her regard could be anything to him, she had at the bottom of her heart resolved that she would be all to him which others were not and ought to have been; and, in intending to be his sister, had already begun to love him more dearly than any sister.

Their worst danger lay in their security: neither of them had ever loved before, so that neither could detect the meaning of their emotions. If the idea of the possibility of his loving a married woman, as husbands love, had been suggested to Markham, he would have driven it from him with horror; . . . . and she in her experience of marriage had had no experience of love; she did not know into how false a life she had betrayed herself. She did not know that she was unhappy with her husband; her unrest was but of the vague indefinite kind that rises in a dreary heart which feels that it might be happy, yet cannot distinguish what it requires to make it so. Poor thing, she was only twenty-five! Nature had sown the seeds in her of some of the fairest of her flowers, but had taken no care for their culture; and they were lying still in the embryo, waiting for light and heart to wake them into life. . . . It were better they had been left to die unborn than that the light should have flowed in upon them from Markham. How can we help loving best those who first give us possession of ourselves? All the day long they were together: living as they did, they could not help being so; . . . . only parting at night for a few short hours to dream over the happy



past day, and to meet again the next morning, the happier for their brief separation. It was a new life to him: what had often hung before him as a fairy vision—what he had longed for, but never found; and here, as if sent down from heaven, was what more than answered to his wildest dreams. Now for the first time he found himself loved for himself—slighted and neglected as he had been . . . suddenly he was singled out by a fascinating woman, who made no secret of the pleasure his friendship gave her. All along his life he had turned with disgust from every word which was sullied with any breath of impurity; the poetry of voluptuous passion he had loathed. Alas! it would have been better far for him if it had not been so. He would have had the experience of his fallen nature to warn him by the taste of the fruit which it had borne in others.

Mrs. Leonard's little girl, too, was not long in discovering that he was her most delightful companion. It was easy for children to love Markham; he knew how to abandon himself; and there they sat these two, the child the third; the common element in which their hearts could meet; Leonard seldom paid much attention to the little Annie, and she transferred her duty as well as her love to her friend; and when she would wind her fingers into his hair as she sat upon his knee, and kiss him and call him papa, he could meet her mother's sweet smiling eyes with a smile as innocent and unconscious as her own. Through the heat of the day they stayed in the cool drawing-room. If Annie was sleeping,

she would draw or work, and Markham would read. He read well, for he read generally his own favourites which he knew, so that, unless she looked at him, the words fell from him as if they were his own. Nor less happy was she when, instead of reading, he would talk to her, and, never having known a willing listener before, would now pour out the long pent-up stream of his own thoughts and feelings. Weak Markham! in the intense interest with which she hung upon his lips, he fancied he saw interest in the subject, which was only interest in himself.

In the evenings they would saunter down to the boat-house, and go out upon the lake. They seldom took a servant to row them; it was more pleasant to be alone: they felt it was, though they had not told themselves why it was; ah! how near are two hearts together when they understand each other without expression.

They were both passionately fond of music. He always took his flute, . . . she would sing when he was tired of playing, and each soon learnt to feign fatigue for the pleasure of listening to the other.

It would be easy to linger over these scenes, yet they can give but small pleasure to us. Those two might be happy in them, only feeling themselves gliding along a sunny stream between flowery meadow banks; but we, who hear the roar of the cataracts, can ill pardon the delirium which, only listening to the sweet voices of the present, holds its ears tight closed against every other . . . So wise are



we for each other . . . . while each one of us has his own small dream, too, over which he, too, is slumbering as foolishly as they, and is as much the mark of his wide-eyed neighbour's scorn.

Week hurried after week; when they met in the morning, they made their plans for the day, each sure that the other's pleasure was what each was most designing for. "Ils commençaient à dire *nous*. Ah, qu'il est touchant, ce nous prononcé par l'amour." . . . And it was par l'amour. The altered tone of their voices showed it; the hesitating tenderness of their glances showed it; the hand lingering in the hand when it had far more than said its morning greeting or its evening parting; and yet they did not know. . . . They will soon know it now. . . . The two metals are melting fast in the warm love fire; they are softening and flowing in and out, vein within vein, a few more degrees of heat, and then . . . . A month had passed, still Leonard did not return. Letters came instead of Leonard. He knew his wife was happy, he said: and as nothing made him so happy as to know that she was so, and as he could not add to it, he was going with Count — to a castle in the Apennines. He would be absent another six weeks, or perhaps two months; when he would return finally to stay till their removal to Rome; where Markham was to be persuaded to go with them.

Markham had not been very well again. His chest had been troublesome; he had caught cold from staying too late upon the lake, and, for a day



or two, was unable to leave the sofa. One very hot afternoon, Mrs. Leonard had been up-stairs for some little time with Annie; and, on her return, he was sleeping: she glided noiselessly to his side and sat down. Some few intense enjoyments are given us in life; among them all, perhaps, there is none with so deep a charm as to sit by the side of those we love, and watch them sleeping. Sleep is so innocent, so peaceful in its mystery and its helplessness; and sitting there we can fancy ourselves the guardian angels holding off the thousand evils imagination paints for ever hanging over what is most precious, most dear to us. The long deep-drawn breathing; the smile we love to hope is called up over the features by our own presence in the heart; there are no moments in life we would exchange for the few we have spent by the side of these. What thoughts, in that long half-hour, passed through the lady's mind, I cannot tell. Markham felt that she was close to him; he was sleeping so lightly, that it was rather he would not than he could not rouse himself, to wake and break so sweet a charm. She was bending over him; he felt her breath tremble down upon his lips; her long ringlets were playing upon his cheek with their strange electric touches. As she gazed down so close upon him, she forgot her self-command; a tear fell upon his face. He opened his eyes, and they met hers full and clear. She did not turn away; no confusion shook into her features. She was but feeling how dear, how intensely dear he was to her; and there

was no room for any other thought. One arm was leaning over the end of the sofa behind his head; the other had fallen down, and was resting on a cushion by her side. Her look, her attitude, those passionately tender tears, all told him the depth, the bewildering depth of her love. He caught the hand which lay beside him, and pressed it to his lips; and, as it lay upon them, he felt it was not only his own which held it there. Dear, dear Mrs. Leonard, was all he could say. How poor and yet how full! Not long volumes of love poetry and wildest passion could bear more of tenderness to the ear which could catch their intonation than these few words. Their lips formed no sound, only they trembled convulsively. They wished, and knew not what they wished; a minute passed, another, another, and still he lay there unmoving, and she was kneeling at his side. Her hand was still clasped in his, and they felt each other's beating hearts in their wild and wilder pulsations; from time to time the fingers closed tighter round their grasp, and thoughts they could not, dared not utter, thrilled through and through them. They did *not* utter them. It was something in the after-struggle to feel that at least no words, no fatal words, had passed. Their treacherous consciences cheated them into a delusive satisfaction that as yet, at least, they had not sinned. How long a time passed by they knew not, for time is only marked by change of thought and shifting feeling, and theirs was but one long-absorbing consciousness of a delicious present.



But the change came at last. Interruption, not from within, but from the outer world which they had forgotten. Ah, Heaven! that at such a moment such a messenger was sent to break the spell. There was a knock, and the door handle turned faintly; she started. It was more, perhaps, from the instinctive delicacy which would hide its deepest feelings from common eye, than from any sense of guilt, and yet something, something shot through her she would have ill liked to explain to herself. She sprung up, and threw herself in a chair as the door opened; and little Annie came tottering in, came in bright and innocent, in there where the two friends were she loved so dearly, to hide her laughing face on the knees of mamma.

It was more than Markham could bear. Far better he could have faced her husband in his anger—better have borne, perhaps, at that moment to have heard his summons to the judgment bar, than that bright presence of unsuspecting innocence. He started from the sofa, and holding his hands before his face, concealing himself from he knew not what, only feeling how ill it all was now with him, and seeming to meet the all-seeing Eye wherever his own eye fell; he ran out of the room, and, hurrying to his closet, flung himself in an agony upon his bed. The child looked wonderingly at him. "Mamma," she said, "is Mr. Sutherland ill? go to him, mamma—take me, and let us make him happy." Mrs. Leonard's tears burst in streams over her little face, from which she dried them off again with passionate



kisses; and, flinging herself upon her knees, she prayed that Heaven would strengthen her and forgive her if she was doing wrong.

And yet God helps not those who do not help themselves, and she had not the strength to fulfil her share of the condition. She hoped for strength to control her feelings, and yet she could not command herself to send the temptation from her. Twice she moved towards her writing-table: a note should go to Markham, and tell him, pray him, for both their sakes, to go away and leave her. Twice her heart failed. The third time the emotion rose, it was not strong enough to move her from her seat. And then insidious reason pressed up to urge a thousand arguments that it was far better he should stay. Both he and she knew themselves now: she knew him too well to fear that Markham was one of those men who, themselves yielding to every emotion, think less of the woman who is only as weak, no weaker, than themselves. No, he was too human to have withdrawn his respect from her; but they were on their guard now, and could never be in danger again. So sad, too, so lonely as he had been; and now his health so delicate; and she who had promised to be all to him which others should have been—she who, perhaps, alone understood him, and could sympathise with him. How could she, why should she, send him from her? Her husband, too, what reason could she give to him? Why need it be? Because she loved him—because he loved her. Surely that was a strange

reason; and, besides, they knew that before. Often and often they had said how dear they had become to one another. And now what difference? Because she would gladly have been more to him than she could be—because she felt (she did not deny it to herself) that she would sooner have been his wife than Leonard's. But why? because they could not be all to one another, must they be as nothing? Dear friends they had been, and might still be, and then—and then—there was something cowardly in flying from temptation—mere temptation. How far nobler to meet and overcome our feelings than basely to fly from them! She had duties—dear duties—to Markham as well as to her husband; she would forget this afternoon, he would forget it, and all would be as it had been.

There was something still which she had not explained—she had not satisfied: the last nerve of conscience which she had failed to paralyse still whispered it was all wrong—it was sophistry and madness; but the dull unimpassioned voice was unheard among the voluptuous melodies of her wishes; and like the doomed city, which shrunk from the voice of the prophetess, she pushed its warnings from her as idle superstition.

When they met again at the tea table, all was not as it had been; such as that it could never be again. Markham, too, in his silent room had felt that there was no safety for them but in parting; and the same devil of sophistry had been at his ear whispering to him. He had long left off writing, even thinking;



that was over when he had ceased to be alone. He had been in the trial of life since then, where the sun and the wind had fallen upon his theories to test them. Alas! where were they? Whirling like the sibyl's idle leaves before the passion gust. . . . Unequal to the effort of a final resolution, yet still forcing himself to do something, he made a compromise with his sense of duty. He would do a little if he would not do all, and he wrote to Leonard urging his return. Unable to give the real reason, he invented false reasons: he said his wife was delicate—he said that for opinion's sake it was better her husband should, by a more frequent presence, show, at least, his approval of his own intimacy with her; that he could not urge this upon her himself as an occasion for his own departure; and, therefore, he had thought it better to write openly to him. In this way he satisfied himself that he had done all he need do, and, let the future be what it would, he had ceased to be responsible.

Fools, and blind! They might have read each the answer to their delusive pleadings, each in their common embarrassment. They were uneasy when alone; their voices trembled as they spoke; they made no allusion to the past; they could not speak of it: it would have been far better if they could. In open speaking and mutual confession *then*, there would, at least, have been a chance of safety for them; their game would have been all upon the board, and they would have taken counsel. We are often strong enough to persuade another against our



own wishes, when we have ceased to be able to persuade ourselves. But this neither of them dared to begin to do. Perhaps it was impossible. Strange! they fancied they intended to be less together, and yet their outer lives went on as before. They left off for a few days saying "*we*," but their eyes said it with deeper tenderness than ever their lips had done. They shrunk openly from each other's gaze, yet each would catch the opportunity, when the other's was turned away, to look as they had never dared to look before; and now they could feel the glances which they did not see, thrilling through them like those on that memorable afternoon. Leonard's answer came. It was what Markham knew it would be when he wrote, though he had not confessed it to himself:—"He was sorry his wife was out of health, but Markham was a better sick-nurse than he was; he would not hear of his leaving her. As to the world, what had the world to do with him? He knew them both, and could trust them too well to let any such folly touch him;"—and such other confiding madness as so often in this world makes love to ruin.

And Markham did not go. He never thought of going now. His conscience was satisfied with what he had done. Unsteady as it was, and without the support which a strongly believed religious faith had once provided for it, he experienced at last what so long he had denied, that to attempt to separate morality from religion is madness; that religion, reduced to a sentiment resting only on internal emotion, is like

a dissolving view, which will change its image as the passions shift their focal distances; that, unrealized in some constant external form, obeying inclination, not controlling it, it is but a dreamy phantom of painted shadow, and vanishes before temptation as the bright colours fade from off the earth when a storm covers the sun.

Rather, in a mind like Markham's, unsupported as his mind was, there is no conduct to which these vague emotions will not condescend to adapt themselves, and which they will not varnish into loveliness. If there be one prayer which, morning, noon, and night, one and all of us should send up to God, it is, "Save us from our own hearts!" Oh! there is no lie we will not tell ourselves. The enchanted Armida garden of love!—how like, how like it is to Paradise! Dreams, delusion, fantastic prejudice it may be called, which a strong mind should spurn from it as a fable of the nursery—ay, should spurn—if it can. Are not ashes bitter on the tongue, though you bring proof in all the logic figures that they are sweet as Hybla honey? And those pleasures which are honey-sweet to the first taste, is there not the sting with its venom-bag lying unseen? Ah! we know not; we know not; we know nothing. But something we can feel; and what is it to us what we know, when we are miserable? All men may not feel so. There are some who, as Jean Paul says, Mithridates-like, feed on poison, and suffer nothing from it; but all tender hearts, who remember the feeling of innocence, will try



long before they can reason away the bitterness out of pleasure which once they have believed not innocent. It is ill changing the creed to meet each rising temptation. The soul is truer than it seems, and refuses to be trifled with.

Day followed after day, bringing with it what it was God's great will should be. I will not pause over these sad weeks of intoxicating delirium. If they did not fall as vulgar minds count falling, what is that to those who look into the heart? Her promise of her heart's truth was broken; and he loved her as he should not love; as once, he would have loathed himself if he could have believed he could ever love the plighted wife of another. I will not judge them. Alas, what judgment could touch them is past and over now!

It is strange, when something rises before us as a possibility which we have hitherto believed to be very dreadful, we fancy it is a great crisis; that when we pass it we shall be different beings; some mighty change will have swept over our nature, and we shall lose entirely all our old selves, and become others.—Much as, in another way, girls and boys feel towards their first communion, or young men to their ordination, which mechanically is to effect some great improvement in them, there are certain things which we consider sacraments of evil, which will make us, if we share in them, wholly evil. Yet, when the thing, whether good or evil, is done, we find we were mistaken; we are seemingly much the same—neither much better nor worse; and then



we cannot make it out; on either side there is a weakening of faith; we fancy we have been taken in; the mountain has been in labour, and we are perplexed to find the good less powerful than we expected, and the evil less evil.

Only, long after, when the first crime has begotten its children, and the dark catalogue of consequences follows out to make clear their parent's nature; when in lonely hours we are driven in upon ourselves, and the images of our unfallen days come flitting phantom-like around us, gazing in so sadly, like angels weeping for a lost soul; when we are forced to know what then we were, and, side by side with it, stands the figure of what we have become, it is then that what has passed over us comes out in its real terrors. Our characters change as world eras change, as our features change, slowly from day to day. Nothing is sudden in this world. Inch by inch; drop by drop; line by line. Even when great convulsions shatter down whole nations, cities, monarchies, systems, human fortunes, still they are but the finish, the last act of the same long preparing, slowly devouring change, in which the tide of human affairs for ever ebbs and flows, without haste, and without rest. Well, so it was with Markham. This final fall of his was but the result of the slow collapsing of his system. His moral nature had been lowered down to it before he sinned; he did not feel any such mighty change; he was surprised to find how easily it lay upon him. Then, in the first delirious trance of happiness, he

seemed to laugh to himself at his old worn-out prejudices. He had been worshipping an idol, which he had but to dare to disobey, to learn how helpless the insulted Deity was to avenge itself. He could still cheat himself with words. He had not yet heard the voice of God calling him. His eyes were opened, not as yet to evil, but only to find himself in a new existence, which he could even dream was a higher and a nobler one. And she—she—when a woman's heart is flowing over for the first time with deep and passionate love, she is all love. Every faculty of her soul rushes together in the intensity of the one feeling; thought, reflection, conscience, duty, the past, the future, they are names to her light as the breath which speaks them; her soul is full. Markham was all these to her; her life, her hope, her happiness. Fearfully mysterious as it is, yet even love, which should never be, yet does not lose its nobleness; so absolutely it can enthral a woman's nature, that self, that cunningest of demons, is deceived, and flies before the counterfeit. Her love is all her thought, her care, her worship. To die for Markham would have been as delightful to Helen as the martyr's stake to a saint. I say it is a fearful mystery that, if love like theirs be what all men say it is, such heroism for it is possible. Yet, indeed, it is but possible for woman, not for man; a man can give his entire soul to an idea, not to a woman—some second thought, even with the highest of us, and in the most permitted relation, will always divide his place with her; it is ever Abelard and



Eloise ; Eloise loves Abelard all ; Abelard loves intellect and the battle of the truth.

Well, on went the summer. They never looked forward, no thought of their guilt had yet intruded to disturb them. How could anything so beautiful be less than good ? Even Annie, Markham could again bear upon his knee, and could laugh and tell her stories as he used to do. They took her with them in their rambles ; she was their boat companion in their lovely evenings upon the water, and once, when the poor child was suffering from inflammatory fever, no father could have watched more anxiously, no physician more carefully put out his skill for her than he did.

At last September came. The finger of love is ineffectual on the wheel of Time ; and, though the summer was deepening in loveliness, the changing tints betrayed that they were but purchasing their beauty at the price of decay ; and now, as it grew clear that some change must come, something must happen soon, Markham began to grow uneasy. In one month at furthest Leonard would return, and what was to follow then ? And his lips flagged in their eloquence, and the clouds began to gather again about his face—and she saw them, and dimly read the cause, which she feared to ask. It was a beautiful afternoon. They had gone, he, she, and Annie, to a distant island up the lake. They had taken a basket with them, and a few cold things, as they often did, and they were not going to return till the cool of the last daylight. The island was



several miles away, and they had overstayed the time when prudence would have warned them homewards, in rambling about the place, and making sketches of an old ruined chapel, which on certain holidays was still a place of pious pilgrimage. It wanted still an hour of dark, when they re-embarked, and as a light warm air had sprung up, and Markham had taken a small sail with him, they still hoped they would be at home before it. Their anxiety was more for Annie than themselves. They had often overstayed the sunset, and laughed to find, when darkness came, how time had glided by with them; but Annie had been ill, and was still delicate . . . Well, the skiff was shooting away under the sunset; the purple sky above them, the purple wave below them; they were sitting together in the stern, and Annie was scrambling about the boat, now listening to the rippling music of the water under the bow, now clapping her little hands in ecstasy at the lovely light flashing and sparkling with a thousand glorious colours in the long frothy wake the thin keel had carved along the surface. Markham told her to come over to them and sit quiet; but they did not seem disposed to talk to her, and at last, under condition of her promising to be perfectly still, he consented to let her stay by herself under the sail, fenced in with cushions.

They were sad those two, and, for a long time, silent. A painful unexplained uneasiness was hanging over both of them. Thoughts were playing across his mind which he feared to share with her,

for fear he might strike some unlucky chord. If, as has been said, it be true that things which concern us most nearly have an atmosphere around them, which we feel when we are entering; that, like birds before a storm, we are conscious of the coming change—perhaps it was another weight which was sinking down their spirits.

At last, as when after we have been some time in darkness, our eyes expand, and objects slowly glimmer out before them into form, so their words began to flow out of the silence, and for the first time Markham spoke of the future.

“Another month—and Leonard will return,” he said, in a thick, half-stifled voice . . . . “and then?”

“I am yours, Markham,” she said. “Dear Markham, you will never leave me?”

“Leave you! Helen,” he answered; “never with my will; but it may not be mine to choose.”

“Oh! yes, yes, it will, it shall. Do not think I have not thought of it. I know what I am going to do.”

He looked inquiringly at her. “Leonard must know we love each other, Helen. We could not, if we would, conceal it from him.”

“Conceal it? Deceive him?” she answered, proudly. “No, not if he was as base as he is noble-minded and generous. Never.”

“Well!” he said, hesitating.

“Well,” she answered; “well, I will tell him all. I will throw myself at his feet, and ask his forgive-



ness; not for loving you, but for ever having been his. That was my sin; to promise I knew not what, and what I could not fulfil."

Markham smiled bitterly.

"I will tell him," she went on; "I will tell him I never loved him; only till I knew you I did not know it. I will do my duty; I will be his servant, if he wishes it. I have done everything for him at home; I will do all that, and far more than all—only as he cannot have my heart . . . . I . . . . I . . . . Surely, if he cannot have it, my heart can be little to him if I give it to you."

Poor, poor thing, when she had lived in the world she had still lived out of it, and turned a deaf ear to its voices. She had no idea what she was doing. Ill instructed as she had been religiously, her instinct had recoiled from the worldly instruction which she might have learnt as a substitute; and she had no notion of right and wrong beyond what her heart said to her.

"That is what you think, Helen," Markham answered. "Now, I will tell you what I think. When you tell him what I am to you, he will kill me, and for you . . . ."

"For me; if it were so, I would die with you, Markham; we cannot live without each other. If we have broken this world's laws, and must die, then love will give us strength."

Markham shuddered. "We might fly," he said.

"Is it really certain that he will separate us, Markham, as soon as he knows?"



“Certain,” he answered. “Every man would feel it his duty; I should myself if I were as he is.”

“Markham, Markham,” she said, passionately, “in all the world I have not a friend—not one; till I knew you I never knew what love, what friendship meant. There is none but you on whom I can lean; there is none to whom I can turn even in thought. Teach me, Markham, teach me; what you tell me I will do.”

“There is no hope except in flight,” he answered, huskily; “if you will leave all for me, I can offer you a home, though but a poor one, and myself, in exchange for what you lose.”

She was silent; her head hung down; he could not see the tears which were raining from her eyes.

“We shall do what the world forbids,” he continued. “The world will punish us with its scorn. It is well. When we accept the consequences of our actions, and do not try to escape from them, we have a right to choose our own course, and do as we will.”

The last words scarce reached poor Helen’s ear; her heart was far away.

“Tell me, Markham,” she said (and she turned her eyes, swimming with tears, full upon him)—“tell me, do not deceive me; you know the world’s ways, or something of them. If I go with you, shall I ever see my child again?”

“I shall be all which will be left you then,” he answered, slowly. “She is his child, and . . . .”

“And her mother’s touch would taint her! Oh,

no, no. Annie, my own darling. I cannot leave my child. No, Markham, no; all but that. I cannot . . . ." She sunk her head upon his shoulder, and her breast shook as if her heart would burst its prison home.

Unhappy lady, wretched Markham, the solving of their problem was nearer than they dreamed of. Look your last, poor baby, on that purple sunset. Turn, gaze out your full on your ill-fated mother. The angels are already cutting their swift way down the arch of heaven to bear away your soul. Yon mountain, whose snow-crueted peaks are melting into the blue of heaven, will again put on their splendour, and glitter crimson-flushed in the glories of the morning—but you will never see them more. One day, and yet another, and the sun which rises on your eyes will be the spirit's sun that lights the palaces of heaven when the blessed are in their everlasting home. Gaze on, gaze on upon your mother! but a little, and then, it must be there, if ever, that you will meet her any more. The pure and innocent are there; you may meet her there, for she loves you with a pure and holy love, and love unbroken here is never broken there.

The breeze had fallen with the sunset. The crimson had melted off the clouds; a few dissolving specks of gray about the sky were all that was left of the glorious vision, and through the purple air the evening star streamed down in its sad, passionate, heart-breaking loveliness. The child had for a long time lain still, as she had been told. At

last, tired of not being amused, she had crawled out from under the clothes in which they had wrapped her against the evening chill, and had begun to find amusement for herself in looking over the boat's side, watching the rippling bubbles as they floated by; and the images hanging in the depths, as if the water was a window through which she was looking down. It was so odd that the bubbles moved by, and the stars did not at all, but went along with them always so exactly in the same place. They were not observing her as they talked. The boat moved slower and slower as the surface of the lake grew still. The deep hum of the night-beetle sweeping by sounded strangely on her ear. The moon rose up into the sky. The rays shone cold into her face, and the little thing shrunk and shivered, and yet she gazed, and gazed. There it was so close to her; just under the boat's edge; rolling and dancing on the wave that washed from off the bow. She could almost touch it, so near it was, a long rolling sheet of gold. She dipped her fingers into the water. It felt warm, deliciously warm, and, when she held up her hand, the wet skin glittered in the light. It was the water then that was so beautiful; and if she could only reach the ripple it was all gold there. She leant over below the sail, and as she stretched out her hand her weight brought the boat's side lower and lower down; just then a faint, a very faint momentary freshening of the air swept into the sail; the gunwale sunk suddenly, and the water rushed up her



arm into her chest. She started back. They saw her then, though they had not seen what had happened to her, and they told her to lie back again where she had been. She was quite wet; but the water seemed so warm and so pleasant, and they might scold her if she told, and she lay back, and did not tell them, and sunk asleep as she was.

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Two hours had passed, and now they were at home again, and in Mrs. Leonard's room. The child's wet clothes had been taken off her; she was in her little bed, breathing thick and heavily. Markham was standing by her from time to time, laying his finger upon her wrist, and Helen on her knees at the bedside, with her eyes fixed upon his face, and fearing to ask anything lest her ear should be obliged to hear what she already read there too plainly. The fever was gathering every moment. When they took the little thing out of the boat, she could not tell him coherently what had happened to her, she could only moan out that she was very cold, and muttered something about the moon. Since she had been taken home she had not spoken, but every moment her forehead was growing hotter, her poor damp skin parched and dry, and her pulse quicker and more feeble.

Presently she opened her eyes, and stared wildly round her.

"Mamma, mamma," she cried. Helen leant over

her, and kissed her burning cheek, but it did not seem as if Annie was calling her, or knew her, or saw her.

“Mamma, mamma, pretty mamma, take me to you; mamma, why cannot I come to you?”

“I am here, my own darling, my own child,” Helen said.

“You are not mamma. Go away, you are not mamma. There is mamma standing there, there, by the bed; beautiful! who is that in white? why do you look at me so? Yes, I wish to go, why can’t I go? There, in the pretty moonlight on the water.”

“She is wandering,” Markham whispered; “she does not see—hush!”

“Where am I, mamma? I was never here before. Where is it? Is this heaven? Where is God? God is in heaven; I don’t see him, I only see light and flowers. Ah, it is all gone, dark, dark, dark.”

She shut her eyes and rolled her head upon the pillow, moaning painfully.

They had scarcely spoken yet, the other two.

“Markham, tell me,” said Helen, with a fearful calmness, “is there any hope?”

“God forbid that I should say there is none, Helen,” he answered slowly.

“Well,” she said quickly, “tell me all, I can bear it.”

“All that man can do is done,” he answered; “the fever will be at its height to-morrow; till then I can tell nothing, we must leave her to God.” It was all that passed between them. What more

at such a time could they say, with this Heaven's lightning blazing before their eyes?

The night wore on; the shadow of the heavy curtains crept slowly across the room; the light was painful to them, they had buried it in a shade; they had neither of them changed their dress, and, together, at either side the little bed, they sat out those awful hours. The room was deathly still; no sound but the heavy breathing of the child, and now and then some strange broken words which her spirit was speaking far away, and the sinking body was but faintly echoing. There are some blows which are too terrible to paralyse us, and, instead of driving consciousness away, only waken every faculty into a dreadful sensibility. Nature has found a remedy for the heaviest of ordinary calamities in the torpor of despair; but some things are beyond her care, perhaps beyond her foresight. Perhaps, in laying down the conditions of humanity, she shrunk from seeing the full extreme of misery which was possible to it. We will turn in silence from Mrs. Leonard's heart: would to God she could have turned from it herself!

Once she raised her eyes to Markham; the moonlight lay upon his features, and so ghastly pale they were, that even the spectral light itself could lend them a warmer colour. While there was anything left to do, so long his heart had left his mind undisturbed to act; but now reflection woke again, and the past, the present, and the future shot before him in terrible review. Let Annie live, or let her die,



he felt God had spoken to him, and he was slowly moulding in himself his answer. Was it the voice of warning, or the voice of judgment? To-morrow would show.

The morrow came; the sun rose and went his way; so slowly he had not gone the long summer through; he sank down, and the evening fell upon the earth, and now the crisis was come. They had never left the room, they had taken no food, they had scarcely spoken to each other. From time to time Markham had turned to the child, had felt her pulse, and poured cooling medicine between her burning lips, and still life and death hung uncertain in the trembling balance. Mrs. Leonard had been lying for an hour, in the greatest exhaustion, on the sofa; about six o'clock Markham woke her, and said, firmly, "The crisis is come now; now sit here and watch her; if at the end of another half hour she is alive, she will recover." He himself moved over to the open window. There lay the deep, dark mountains, and the silver lake, the blue cloudless sky bending over them in unutterable beauty; the young swallows were sweeping to and fro far up in their airy palace; the pale blue butterflies were sauntering from flower to flower, and every tree was thrilling in the evening air with the impassioned melodies of the nightingales. Never, never since the sad wanderers flung their last lingering look on the valleys of that fair Eden from which they and all their race were for ever exiled, had human eyes yet gazed upon a lovelier earthly scene than that

which now lay out below the window where Markham was standing. Alas, alas! when the heart is indeed breaking, with a grief beyond hope, beyond consoling, how agonizing is the loveliness of nature! It speaks to us of things we cannot reach. It mocks our fevered eyes with Tantalus visions of paradise, which are not for us; floating before us like phantoms in a dream, and gliding from our grasp as we stretch our arm to seize them. It is well, yes, it is well, but it is hard for the bruised heart to feel it so. All, all nature is harmonious, and must and shall be harmony for ever; even we, poor men, with our wild ways and frantic wrongs, and crimes, and follies, to the beings out beyond us and above us, seem, doubtless, moving on our own way under the broad dominion of universal law. The wretched only feel their wretchedness: in the universe all is beautiful. Ay, to those lofty beings, be they who they will, who look down from their starry thrones on the strange figures flitting to and fro over this earth of ours, the wild recklessness of us mortals with each other may well lose its *painful* interest. Why should our misdoings cause more grief to them than those of the lower animals to ourselves? Pain and pleasure are but forms of consciousness; we feel them for ourselves, and for those who are like ourselves. To man alone the doings of man are wrong; the evil which is with us dies out beyond us; we are but a part of nature, and blend with the rest in her persevering beauty.

Poor consolers are such thoughts, for they are but

thoughts, and, alas! our pain we feel. Me they may console, as I think over this farce tragedy of a world, or even over the nearer sorrows of a friend like Markham Sutherland. For Markham himself, in this half hour—they were far enough from his heart.

He was dreaming again of old times, of the old Markham, once simple and pure as that poor dying child, who could once look up with trusting heart to his Father in heaven, and pray to Him to keep him clean from sin; and his sick heart shrunk appalled from the wretched thing which he had become, and the gulf which was yawning under his feet.

A cry from Helen roused him; he collected himself rapidly, and moved across the room to her. Annie's eyes were open, the flush of pain had passed from off her face; she knew them both, and was feebly trying to stretch out her little hands towards her mother. She was dying; her eyes were glittering with a deep unearthly lustre from the visions on which she had been gazing. They had but turned back for a moment, for a last good bye, and earth and all that was dear to her on earth would be lost then, to return no more. One look was enough for Markham; he saw all was over, and he hid his face in his hands. "Good bye, mamma, I am going away; good bye, don't cry, dear mamma, I am very happy." The heavy eyelids drooped, sunk, rose again for one last glance—her mother's image only was all it caught, and the light went out for ever.

That last thought had traced the tiny features into a smile. It was the smile, the same sweet



smile Mrs. Leonard knew so well, which night after night she had so often gazed upon, and had stood on tiptoe and held her breath lest she should break the sleeping charm. Ah! she may speak now loud as she will, and have no fear of breaking slumber deep as this. Still lay the little frame, still as the silent harp there before the window, but no cunning hand shall ever sweep those heart-strings to life; their sweet notes shall never, never speak again.

"It is over," Markham said, in a low voice. "She is in peace now. All-righteous God!"

Mrs. Leonard had flung herself upon the bed. The tears burst out, and fell in streams over her dead child's face. She drew it to her breast, where once its baby lips had gathered life and strength. Ah! why may it not be again? Her tears rained down, but they were not tears with which the bruised heart unloads the burden of its sorrow, but the bitter, burning tears of bewildered agony.

Her Annie, her darling; all she had till she knew Markham; she who had first made life delightful to her; who had taught her heart first to love; now dead, gone, torn from her; and, oh! worse, worse; their own doing. How it was she did not know; but their fault it was. Her nature was too weak to bear so complicated a misery, and her mind broke into disorder. Surely, yes, surely, it must have broken, or thoughts like these could never have to come to her now.

She rose steadily, and walked up to Markham, and laid her hand upon his arm.

“Markham,” she said, “it is for my sin. Would, oh, would it had been myself, not she, who has been taken! It is for my sin in marrying her father. It was an offence against earth and Heaven, and the earthly trace of it is blotted out, and its memory written in my heart in letters of fire. Now, Markham, if I am not to die too, take me away. I can never see him again.”

It would be difficult to conceive words which at the moment could have shocked Markham more fearfully. He, too, had seen Heaven's finger in what had been; but he thought it was a punishment for the sin which he had wished to commit—a stern and fearful interposition to save him from completing it. Strange, too, that even with such thoughts, serious as they really were, it was not duty, it was not Helen, which was predominant with him, it was himself. Not so much that God would prevent a sin as that He would save him. Sceptic, philosopher as he was, this was what he made of it. On her it had come as a punishment for loving him, and for having allowed him to love her.

“What, Helen; with your child dead before you? at such a moment to speak of . . . of . . . what I dare not think of. Oh, Helen, Helen! we must think of duty now. Think of your husband.”

“Markham,” she said, with dreadful calmness, “these are strange words . . . from you. Husband I have none. You taught me that I had none.” And there, she added, pointing with her finger, “Is not there a witness too?”



“Oh! this is too much,” Markham cried; “she is mad; I cannot bear it.” He rushed out of the room. His own teaching—with him but words—words in which feelings he now recoiled from, had fashioned themselves into a creed which he had but dreamt that he believed—and now coming back upon him so dreadfully. It is not so easy a business this turning back out of the wrong way. These words and deeds of ours we scatter about us so recklessly find deeper holding ground than in our own memory. It is not enough to say I will turn and go back. What if I must carry back with me all those whom I have taken down; if I have bound up their fate with mine; if, after all, life be something more than these thoughts and feelings, and repentances—not altogether that shadow of a world with which we have been playing. Others, besides unhappy Esau, find no place for repentance, though they seek for it ever so carefully. He hurried to his own room, and, shutting himself in and double-locking the door, he threw himself exhausted upon his bed. He had taken no food all day. Mind and body were worn to the last. He heard her step follow him. He heard her voice imploring him to speak with her; but for a moment if it must be, but still to speak to her. But he would not, he durst not; and, giddy between weakness and excitement, he sunk into unconsciousness. He must have lain many hours as he was, for the day was breaking when he came to himself again. He had lain down in his clothes; he rose



weak and worn, and disordered, but the heavy sense of wretchedness which entered in with his returning consciousness left him no strength to collect or arrange himself. He opened the window, and looked out. A thick grey fog lay over the valley, but the air was cool; he thought he would go out. He stole down the stairs. He paused opposite her door. Twice he turned to enter. As often his heart failed him; he feared to see the state in which she might be. He listened; he heard her breathing, and then glided noiselessly to the outer door, which he opened, and went out. The walk before him led down to the lake; up that walk he had come the last time with *her*, and with one who would not pass that way again. He followed it mechanically now, and wandered slowly along the shore. The tops of the mountains were showing out faintly above the mist, so quiet it was, so still, so peaceful. Ah, it was little to him how it was with the fever in his own breast; yet his mind was quick in catching every image which would add to his agony. Turn where he would, some dear spot fell upon his eyes round which a thousand passionate memories were encircled. There was the little bay where he had first met her. There was his own old little cottage with the jessamine twining about the windows, where till that hour, that fatal hour, he had dreamed of a happy home. And now — Yet even the scenes of the love which he shrunk from were beautiful as he looked back. No unhallowed light seemed resting on

them now, and in the shrine of the past they lay sad, and sweet, and innocent. Yes, all was beautiful, except the wretched present and his own most wretched self. What should he do? Go with her. He thought of it; yet he knew that he did not love her—that he had never truly loved her. He had felt remorse and sorrow for it; and it would be as easy to regret a prayer or a saintly action as to be sorry for having truly loved. Why, oh, why has love so many counterfeits, such cunning imitations? No, he would not, even if his eyes had not been opened to the sin—he would not fly with her. What future would there be for them—the world's outcasts—if love was not there to make the bitter cup more tolerable? He could not hope again to weave around him the shadows of feeling to which for the last three months he had surrendered himself. To forsaken truth, to neglected duty, we can return; but tie up again the broken threads of a dream out of which we have been awakened—never.

He walked on along the lonely sands, his uncovered hair moist in the morning air, and the morning breeze playing coldly about his disordered dress. But sense was lost in the dreary wilderness of desolation which lay around his soul; he only felt his misery, and pain would have been a relief to him. What should he do? Go back to Helen? How go back? How bear to look on her again? Never, oh, never. It could not be. He feared to look upon his work. He feared to hear

the voices moaning round the ruin which he had made—to hear—to hear (was she mad, or was it his own self that spoke)—to hear his own teaching echoed back to him; the monster to which he had given birth, and which now haunted him instinct with a spectral vitality. To see again that unhappy lady who, till she knew him, had been happy in a child whom she loved, in a husband whom she was ignorant that she did not love; and who, now that his accursed star had shed its baneful light upon her, in three little months, ere the leaves which were then bursting in their young life had turned to decay, was husbandless, friendless! Oh! and most of all dreadful, her child too. He could not leave her that . . . gone, all gone; and he had done it. To leave her there, he knew it too well, was to leave her to die. And yet he must leave her. Himself, which was all that remained to her, that too he must tear away. And then, in these wretched hours, his wasted life came back upon him; his blighted hopes, his withered energies—a curse to himself, he had been the grief of his family—of his friends; of all who should have been most dear to him. There was a mark upon him; a miserable spell, a moral pestilence, which made him his own hell, and tainted whatever he approached. And now at last, when one had been found who loved him, loved him with a passion he dared not think of, this one he had destroyed for ever. What business had such a thing as he, “crawling between



earth and heaven," with such a trail behind him? If it was better that the murderer should die, than remain in the society to which he was a curse; if it were better for any beings whose presence makes the misery of their fellow-creatures, that they perish from off the earth where they never should have been; then surely it were better far for him. What future was there to which he could look forward? As was the past time so would the coming be. The Ethiopian does not change his skin. The slimy reptile which has left its track along the floor will not, for all its own care or others' chiding, lose its venom, and become pure. He was infected with the plague. Earth was lost to him. Heaven was a dreary blank. One by one, as he had wandered in the wilderness of speculation, the beacon lights of life had gone out, or sunk below the horizon. He only knew God by this last lightning flash, which had but shown him the abysses which environed him, and had left his senses more bewildered than before. Death, as he dwelt upon it, grew more and more alluring. Years before the thought of destroying himself had floated before him as a possibility; and with a kind of strange, unexplained impulse, by which our deeper nature, like that of animals, unreflectingly foresees its future necessities, he had provided himself with a deadly poison, which he always carried about his person. As he drew it out and gazed upon it, more and more clear it seemed to him that here was the goal

to which all was pointing. Round this one light every shadow seemed to vanish. So he would expiate his sin. So perhaps Helen's life might be saved. It would be easier for her to bear to know that he was dead, than to feel either that he had deceived or forsaken her, or to hope on in a restless anguish of disquietude. At any rate, as it was his life which had worked her ill, his life should be no longer; and so at least she would have a chance. For her, for all his friends to whom he had caused so much sorrow—for all those whom if he lived on he might hereafter meet and injure—oh! for all, it was far, far the best. For himself, one of two things he would find in the grave: either as that bodily framework, out of which such inharmonious life discords had arisen, became unstrung and lifeless, the ill music that had poured from it would die away, and its last echo be forgotten, the soul with the body dissolve for ever into the elements of which it was composed—or else, if what he called his soul, his inward being, himself was indeed indissoluble, immortal, and in some sphere or other must live, and live, and live again, then he would find another existence where a fairer life might be found possible for him. At any rate it could not be worse. No, not that dark sulphurous home of torture, at the name of which he had once trembled, not hell itself, could be less endurable than the present . . . . There at least he would not *do* evil any more, he would only suffer it; and the keenest external agony which could be

inflicted upon him he would gladly take in change for the torment which was within him. His mind grew calmer as it grew more determined. It is irresolution only, the inability from want of power, or will, or knowledge, to determine at all, which leaves us open to suffering: resolution, however dreadful, determined resolution to do something, restores us at once to rest and to ourselves . . . . At first he thought the moment of the determination might as well be the moment of the act. Himself condemning himself to die, and his own executioner, with the means ready in his hands, he need not leave himself an interval of preparation. Why bear his pain longer when he could at once leave it? But the intensity of his determination he felt presently had itself relieved him. As it was to be done judicially, it should be done gravely and calmly. He would set his house in order, and write a last letter to Helen, undoing as far as he could his own fatal work, and praying for her last forgiveness.

The sun had long risen; he had walked many miles, and, as the strain upon his mind grew lighter, his body began to sink and droop. At no great distance from where he found himself, he remembered, was the cottage of a peasant with whom he had some acquaintance, and to whom, in the last winter, he had been of considerable assistance in curing him of a dangerous illness. There he thought he would go and remain for a few hours, till he had rested and refreshed himself. He



dragged himself painfully to the door; it was open, and he went in without knocking. The man was at home, and started at the strange intruder so suddenly presenting himself; scarcely less surprised he was when he discovered who it was that lay under all that disorder.

“Holy Virgin!” he cried; “Signor Sutherland, what has happened to bring you here like this?”

Markham was generally so scrupulous in his dress; and, now he had no hat, his long hair was hanging matted over his face, his cheeks were sunk and hollow, and his eyes bloodshot from long care and watching.

“It is nothing,” he said; “only I have been walking long, and am tired. If you will let me have something to eat, and a bed to lie down and rest on for a few hours; and if you, in the meantime, will go yourself into Como for me, I shall thank you.”

“To the world’s end I will go for you, Signor; but what ——?”

“Do not ask me any questions,” Markham said; “but go for me, and do what I shall tell you, and you will be doing me a service.”

The man stared, but said nothing more; and, while his wife busied herself to get their strange guest’s breakfast, he made ready for his walk.

Markham sat down and wrote three notes; one to his banker with directions for the payment of a few bills left unsettled in the town, and desiring them to make over what remained of his money in

their hands to some public charity. The second was to the people of his old lodging. His clothes, and anything else they had of his, they were to keep for themselves; but his books and manuscripts were to be packed together and sent to England to myself. He himself, he said, was going away, and it was uncertain when he might return. The last was to Helen: brief and scrawled with a shaking hand, and blotted with his tears. It was only to say that he was gone: he would write once more, but that she would never see him again. This one was to be left at the gate of the villa, and the man was to hurry on at once, without asking or answering any questions. As soon as the notes were despatched, he took some food and then threw himself on a bed in the inner room, and fell at once into a deep unbroken sleep.

Como was not many miles distant; the messenger soon reached it, and finished his commissions; these were difficulties more easily overcome than his curiosity at the mysterious visit. He was leaving the town again without any acquaintance having fallen in his way to whom he might chatter out the wonder that disturbed him, when he encountered the priest at whose confessional he was occasionally present. He saluted him respectfully, and the father stopped him to ask some trifling question. It encouraged him to relieve himself. His listener knew Markham's name well; he had often heard of his little acts of kindness in the neighbourhood, and had more than once seen him and been struck with

his appearance. He knew that he had been living for some months at the Leonards'; and when he heard of his strange appearance in the morning, of the note which he had sent, and of the way in which it was to be given, the father felt that there was some connection between the two things, and that a mystery of some painful kind was hidden under them.

"Ah! father," the man said, "there is something on his mind, I know there is, or his sweet face would never have had that awful look upon it. Perhaps he is mad, and the Devil has hold of him. If you would but come."

"It is no place for me," was the answer. "He is a heretic and an Englishman. I could do nothing."

"Oh, but, father," the peasant said, "it is not an outcast that he can be, so good and so young; and last winter, when the hunger came and the fever, and I was like to die with them, and I prayed to the Virgin to help me, she sent this English signor to me, and he gave me food and money, and he drove the illness away; and it cannot be that she would employ in that way a lost heretic."

The priest thought a little while; suddenly something seemed to strike him. "To-day," he said, "yes, it was to-day, he was to come." He took a letter out of his pocket, and read it rapidly over. "He will pass through Como on the 10th on his way to Rome; we have directed him to St. —, where you will not fail to see him." It may be so;



yes, he may be here now, and so something might be done. He continued to mutter indistinctly to himself, and, telling his companion to follow him, walked rapidly to the monastery at the upper end of the town.

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Late in the afternoon Markham awoke; he inquired whether the man was come back from Como, and, on learning that he was not, he sat down again at the table, and, with his purpose steady before him, wrote his last good bye to such of us as cared to receive it. There was one letter to myself, inclosing another to his father, which I was to give him. This last I might read if I pleased; it was very short, but a generous, open-minded, affectionate entreaty to be forgiven all the pain which he had caused him. I, he told me, would receive his manuscripts from Italy. If I thought, he said in his bitter way, that he was one of Bishop Butler's favourites, the end of whose existence was only to be an example to their fellow-creatures, I might make what use I pleased both of them and of what I knew of his life. He had before written to me about Helen, and, giving me a rapid summary of what had passed, added that I should understand the conclusion. It was all over, he thought, as he was writing — As I read over those last letters now, I could almost wish that his purpose had been fulfilled as he designed it; but I will not anticipate.

The most painful thing was yet to be done: he must

write a few last words to Helen. They never reached their destination; either from inadvertence or from nervousness, he forgot the direction, and this letter was sent with the other to me. The hand was steady at the beginning, as if he had nerved himself for a violent effort; but his heart must have sunk as he went on. Many words were written through the blots of tears, and the end is scarcely legible.

“Helen,” he wrote, “you have reason to hate me; yet you will not when you read this, for, by that time, I shall have made my last expiation to Heaven and to you. Yesterday I thought of myself, and I wished I had never seen you. Now I see my own littleness too plainly to care what might have been my fate. But, O Helen! would to God you had never seen me. We have been to blame. If you do not feel it, yet believe it, for me—for my sake; it is all you can do for me now. Believe it, and forgive me. You forgive me; I do not forgive myself till my life has paid for my unworthiness. Forgive me and forget me; I never deserved your love; I do not deserve your remembering. I never really loved you; a heart like mine was too selfish to love anything but itself. I did but fall into a dream, and I tempted you into it waking; the fault was all mine, let my sacrifice suffice. I will not tell you to be happy now—that cannot be after what you have lost. But it is not for nothing that God is visiting you: and if he has taken Annie from you, and taken me from you, it is for your sake, that He may win you for Himself. Turn,

then, oh, turn! there *you* will find peace, and pray for yourself and pray for me. And it may be—it may be—O Helen! pray that it may be, that in a little while—but a little—when your body will lie down in the dust by the side of ours, that our spirits may meet again, when I may be better worth your loving, and where love shall be no sin; and the peace we have lost here shall be given us there for ever.

“Farewell! forgive me—farewell!”

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Not far from the cottage, on the shores of the lake, was a spot where human hands had piled together a few old massive stones, and a stream of water, perhaps with some assistance, had scooped a basin in the granite. It was said that, many centuries before, a man had made a home there who was haunted by some strange sin; and the worn circle which was traced into the hard surface of the rock was still pointed out as the sign of the victory of penitence. It had been worn by the painful knees of a subdued and broken-hearted man, whose long watches the stars for thirty years had gazed upon, and whose prayers the angels had carried up to heaven; and fast and penance, and the dew and the rain, and the damp winds, had cleansed the spots from off the tainted soul, and God's mercy, before he died, had hung round him the white garments of a saint. It was a holy place; the peasants crossed themselves as they passed by, and



stopped, and knelt, and prayed the pardoned sinner's intercession for their sins; and a small rude crucifix, carved, it was said, out of the very wood of Calvary, stood yet over the old stone which had been the altar of the tiny chapel. What strange attraction drew Sutherland's steps there, it would be hard to say; whether it was that, in this forlorn and desolate ruin, this poor wretched remnant of a worn-out creed seemed to find a sympathetic symbol of his own faith-deserted soul—or whether it was some more awful impulse, like that which haunts blood-guilty men, and, compelling them to their own self-betrayal, forces them to hang spell-bound round the scene of their crime, as if the forsaken faith could only fitly there revenge itself on the same spot which once had witnessed its victory—I know not—or perhaps the threads which move our slightest actions are woven of a thousand tissues; and all these and innumerable others drew him there together. He sat down upon the broken wall. The ripple of the lake was curling and crisping on the pebbles at his feet. The old familiar scenes in the distance around him, so quiet and so beautiful—far away a white sail was glittering in the sunlight—happy human hearts were beating where that sail was, bounding along their light life way, with wings of hope and pleasure. Nearer still the island, the fatal island, and the treacherous water, and, last and worst, he could see the trees which hid the house where Helen was now lying—the lost, desolate Helen—alive or dead he

knew not, he hardly cared, when life could be to her but living death. The scene hung on upon his senses; but soon it was but floating on their surface, and his mind turned in upon his memory, and year by year, scene by scene, his entire life rose up before him, and rolled mournfully by. His love had been but a passing delirium; she had never had all his soul; and now what had the truest hold on his affections, — old home, and the old church bells, and his mother's dying blessing, came echoing sadly back again. And yet the storm was past. He was calm now, for he was determined. Tears were flowing fast down his face: but they were not tears of suffering, but soft tears, in which all his soul was melting at this last adieu to life, which, poisoned as it had been for him, he could not choose but love. He did not regret his purpose; he did not fear to die. Death must be some time, whatever death was. But it was the very death which was so near, which seemed to have taken off the curse from what he was leaving, as if the dawning light of his expiation was already breaking over the darkness. He took the phial from his pocket, with a steady hand he untied the covering, and poured its contents into a little cup; he put it down upon the stone. So clear, so innocent, it sparkled there. "Now for the last, then," he said. Once more he turned his eyes to the blue heaven, and round over the landscape, so beautiful, so treacherously beautiful. A thin white cloud was sailing slowly up to-

wards the sun. We often fix our resolution by the aid of other actions besides our own. The cloud should give the signal for his going. It would but veil the sunlight for a moment; but in that moment a shadow would fall down on his spirit, which would pass away no more.

“All is over now then,” he said, “and to this fair earth, and sky, and lake, and woods, and smiling fields, and all the million things which gambol out their life in them, now good bye, and for ever. You will live on; and the wind will blow, and men will laugh and sigh, and the years roll along, with their great freights of joy and sorrow; but I shall hear their voices no more. One pang, and I shall be lying there, among those old stones, as one of them. Little happiness, at best, there is, with all this fair seeming. A little—but a little—but I shall not be here to make that little less. A few friends may be sorry for me when they hear of this last end; but their pain will be brief as mine, and the wound will heal, and time will bear away its memory; and for me no mortal heart will suffer more. Farewell, Helen! last witness that earth had no deeper curse than love of me. Your spirit is broken; but peace may breathe over its ruins when I am gone. Farewell, farewell! The shadow steals over the earth. I see it; the dark cloud spot rolling down the hill so fast, so fast. Oh! may it be a true emblem—the one dull spot in the great infinity of light! These stones, this altar. they have echoed to sorrow deep, perhaps, as mine; and faith in this poor



atom, poor carved chip of rotting wood, cheated the sufferer into a lengthened agony of years. Miserable spell that clings around us! we can but pass from dream to dream; but change one idol for another; and place the very Prophet who came to free us, on the pedestal from which he had thrown down the image.

Another moment—he raised the poison. “And Jesus Christ died on this?” he said, as his eyes lingered on the crucifix, “died for our sins . . . so I die to lighten others’ sorrows, and to end my own!”

“Die without hope—the worst sinner’s worst death—to bear your sin, and your sin’s punishment, through eternity!”

Was it the rocks that spoke? It was a strange echo. Markham started. The cup sunk upon the altar stone. His pulse, which had not shaken before, bounded violently in his heart, as he turned and looked round him. And the figure he saw, and the glance he met, was hardly calculated to give him back his courage. How well he knew it! How often in old college years he had hung upon those lips; that voice so keen, so preternaturally sweet, whose very whisper used to thrill through crowded churches, when every breath was held to hear; that calm grey eye; those features, so stern, and yet so gentle!—was it the spirit of Frederick Mornington which had been sent there, out of the other world, to warn him? Was it a dream, a spectre? What was it? Oh! false, how false, that a man who is

bold to die, is bold for every fear! Markham's knees shook; his hair rose upon his head, and his tongue hung palsied in his throat, as he struggled to speak.

"God sent me here to seek one who might be saved. He did not tell me I should find Markham Sutherland!"

"What are you?" stammered Markham. "How came you here?"

"I have come in time," he answered, cutting every syllable in the air with his clear impassive voice, as if he was chiselling it in marble.

Markham's confused sense began to remember. Mr. Mornington had been for two years in Italy, washing off, in a purer air, the taint of the inheritance of heresy.

"Come with me," he said, with the manner which knows it is obeyed; "you must not stay here;" he crossed himself; "the place is holy!" He took the poison-cup from the stone, and threw it far away, and, with water from the fountain, he sprinkled the place where it had lain, and where Markham had been sitting.

The young man watched him mechanically. This last action did not escape him; he was infected, and what he touched he tainted. He made no effort to resist. He who had but a few moments before philosophised over superstition, was feeble as a child. Again he saw in this the finger of Heaven, which he could not choose but obey.

Mr. Mornington moved out of the consecrated

ground, signing to him to follow; and he went without hesitating. Partly it was the reviving of the power with which, in earlier years, this singular person had fascinated him; partly it was his guilt-subdued conscience, which felt that it had forfeited the right to its own self-control. When they were outside the circle that marked the holy ground, his companion turned to him with features which had lost half their sternness, and had softened into an expression of tenderness and feeling.

“And is it indeed you, Markham, you, I find here in this dreadful way? . . . . I spoke sternly to you, I could not speak otherwise there. But, Markham, I do not forget: I can be your friend as a man, if I cannot be more to you. Dear Markham, it was not a chance which sent me here; I was told I should find an Englishman, and an unhappy one. As an English priest my duty brought me here, and I come to find you, Markham, you on the very edge of a precipice so fearful, that it is only now that I have led you from it, that you or I can feel its awfulness; and I feel—yes, and you feel—it was not an accident which ruled it so.

Markham's heart was bursting. “Dear kind Mr. Mornington,” he said, “you do not know what you have done. It would have been better if you had left me; you may think so when you hear all that I will tell you.”

Mornington's softening face grew softer; he knew the virtue of confession; he knew that only a broken heart would turn to it unconstrained, and how soon the



broken heart may become a contrite one. That day Markham told him all, first this long dark story, the last load which lay the heaviest upon him; then, as he began to rise from under the weight, he saw more clearly, or thought he saw, how fault had followed fault, and one link hung upon another; and step by step he went back over his earlier struggles, his scepticisms, his feeble purpose and vacillating creed, all of them outpouring now as sins confessed. His listener's sympathies were so entire, so heartfelt, he seemed himself to have passed through each one of Markham's difficulties so surely he understood them. Nay, often the latter was startled to find himself anticipated in his conclusions, and to hear them rounded off for him in language after which he himself had been only feeling. At last it was all over. The inexpressible relief he felt seemed to cry to him of reconciliation and forgiveness. Mr. Mornington pressed but little upon him; his heart was flowing, the wound had burst for itself, and had no need of urging. When it was finished, he said, "Markham, I have heard you as a friend, I have only to ask you whether your conscience does not tell you that you have found a way at last where you thought that there was none, and whether you are prepared to follow it?"

"Oh, yes,—yes," he said.

"But to follow it now? now while your heart is warm and the quick sense is on you of what you are and of what you were." Again Markham passionately professed his readiness.

Then you will repeat to another what you have confided to me ; not as I have heard it, but under the sacred seal of confession ; you will undertake the penance which shall be laid upon you ; and you will look forward with steady hope to a time when you may be received into the holy church, and may hear your absolution from her lips ?

If Markham hesitated it was but for a moment. Mr. Mornington went on . . . . “ Your philosophy, as you called it, taught you to doubt whether sin was not a dream ; you feel it now ; it is no dream, it is a real, a horrible power ; and you see whither you have been led in following blindly a guide which is but a child of the spirit of evil.

How true it is that arguments have only power over us while the temper is disposed to listen to them ! Not one counterfact had been brought before him, not one intellectual difficulty solved, yet under the warm rain of penitence the old doubts melted like snow from off his soul. He *felt* his guilt, he *felt* that here that dreadful consciousness might be rolled away, and as idle he thought it would be to stand hesitating with frozen limbs with a fire within sight and within reach, till some cunning chymist had taught him why the fire was warm, as to wait now and hang aloof till the power which he felt was explained to him.

Whether all along below his weakness some latent superstition had not lain buried, which now for the first time broke out into activity, or whether he mistook the natural effect of having unloaded his



aching conscience in a kind listener's ear, for a supernatural spiritual strength which was flowing down upon him from heaven, or whether it was indeed true that his reason had gone astray; that reason *is* by some strange cause perverted, and of itself and unassisted it can but present a refracted image of the things of the spirit with every line inclining at a false angle; and that the strange inexplicable *sense* which contradicts reason (for we cannot flinch from the alternative) is the one faithful glimpse and the only one of the truth of God, enough for our guidance and enough to warn us against philosophy—were questions which long after, in his solitary cell, the unhappy Markham was again and again condemned to ask himself, and to hear no answer, except in the wild rolling storm of eager angry voices calling this way and that way and each crying down the other. . . . But there was no such hesitating now. The overpowering acuteness of his feeling unnerved what little intellect was left unshaken, and the gentleness and fascination of Mr. Mornington held him like a magnetic stream. He did all they bid him do; for a time he felt all they promised that he should feel. He felt that it was his doubt which had unhinged him; he had fallen because his moral eye had become dim. Deep as his sin had been, Mr. Mornington told him it was not mortal, because it had been uncompleted; saints had fallen, the man after God's own heart had fulfilled as deep or a deeper crime. If he could submit himself utterly and unreservedly to



the holy church, the church in God's stead would accept him and would pronounce his full forgiveness.

He confessed, and after undergoing the prescribed penance, he received the conditional baptism, was absolved, and retired into a monastery. Once and once only his human feeling was strong enough to make him speak again to Mr. Mornington of Helen, and to ask what had become of her. But a cold severe answer that she was cared for, and a peremptory command never to let his thoughts turn upon her again (with a penance for every transgression) until those under whose care he had been placed could give him hopes that his *prayers* might be offered for her unsullied by any impurity—together with the severe rule of discipline under which he had by his own desire been laid—for a time at least drove her out of his mind. His crushed sense became paralysed in the artificial element into which he had thrown himself. His remorse overwhelmed his sympathy with her. . . . She belonged to the old life which he had flung off, and he endeavoured only to remember her in an agony of shame.

Poor Helen! she was cared for. How that night and those days passed with her was never known. Markham's note was brought her the morning of his disappearance, and she knew that he too was gone when all else was gone—gone!—lost to her for ever! It swept over her lacerated heart like the white squalls over the hot seas of India, with a fury too intense to raise the waves, but laying them all

flat in boiling calm. It appears she collected energy enough to write to Mr. Leonard, desiring him to come to her at once. She gave no reason—she did not even tell him that his child was dead; only he must come to her, come on the instant. When he came he found her in a state of almost unconsciousness. Her nerves were for the time killed by what she had gone through; but when she saw him she was able to gather herself up. She knew him—she knew what she had to say to him; and coldly, calmly, and gravely she told him all. There were no tears, no passionate penitence, no entreaties for forgiveness. Her words fell from her almost like a voice from the shadowy dead sent up out of their graves on some unearthly mission; and they awed him as such a voice would awe him. His rude and simple nature might have broken into passion had he seen one tinge of shame, or fear, or any feeling which he would have expected to find. He had never loved her, though he thought he had. Perhaps he was too shallow to love. But he might have felt real rage at his own injury, and he might have persuaded himself, in proper sort, that he felt all which an affectionate husband ought to feel; but this unnatural calmness overmastered him entirely. He was passive in her hands, to do or not to do whatever she might choose. What could she choose? Home and kind home-faces there were none for her. Friends, except Markham, not one; and him—whatever was become of him—she was never to see again. He had not even written again



to her as he had promised. Death had not come, though she had prayed for it. Madness had not come; she was too single-minded to think of suicide.

To be alone with the past was all for which she wished. There was but one gate besides the grave which she knew was never closed against the broken-hearted—it was that of the convent. She knew little and cared little for difference of creeds. It was not the creed of the Catholic which was the seed out of which those calm homes of sorrow have risen over the earth; but deepest human feeling, deepest knowledge of the cravings of the suffering heart. There at least was kindness, and tenderness, and compassion—there no world voice could break in to trouble her—there let her go. Her husband made no difficulty. In his heart he was not sorry, as it settled for him a question which might be embarrassing; and the few arrangements which money could command were soon made with a relation of one of his Italian friends, the Abbess of ——. The story was told her. Such stories were not new in Italy; though it was new that of her own free will, a lady who had done what she had done, and had been bred in the free atmosphere of the world, should seek out so austere a home. And there went Helen—and there for two years she drooped, and then she died. All that woman's care or woman's affection could do to soften off her end was done. The exhaustion of her suffering left her soul in calm, and gave her back enough possession of herself to



enable her to entangle into affection for her the gentle hearts which were round her and watched over her. It was a deep, intense affection; deeper, perhaps, because of the doubt and sorrow which were blended with it. For Helen lived and died unreconciled with the Church. She loved it—she loved its austerity, its charity, the wide soul-absorbing spirit of devotion which penetrated and purified it, and the silvery loveliness of character which it had to bestow; and Helen might have joined it, might have received from its lips on this side the grave the pardon which may God grant she has yet found beyond it: only if she could have made one first indispensable confession that she had *sinned* in her love for Markham Sutherland—yet, with singular persistency, she declared to the last that her sin had been in her marriage, not in her love. Unlike his, her early training had been too vague to weigh at all against the *feeling* which her love had given her; she had little knowledge and an unpractised intellect—she had only her heart, which had refused to condemn her—she had never examined herself. The windings, wheel within wheel, of the untrue spirit's self-deceptions, were all strange to her, for she had always been too natural to think about herself at all. Perhaps the heart does not deceive; never does give a false answer except to those double-minded unhappy ones who do care about themselves, and so play tricks with it and tamper with it. At any rate, whether from deadness of conscience, or from

apathy, or indifference, or because of the unrepenting tenderness of her love, which never left her (although they took care to tell her of Markham's repentance), she still clung to her feeling for him as the best and most sacred of her life. She acknowledged a sin which they told her was none, for she felt that she ought never to have promised Leonard what she had; but Markham she loved, she must still love. Her love for him could not injure him. If he was happy in forgetting—in abjuring her, she was best pleased with what would best heal his sorrow.

Strange contrast—the ends of these two! She died happy, forgiven by her husband and going back to join her lost child, where by and by they might all meet again, and where Markham need no longer fly from her; for there, there is “no marrying nor giving in marriage.” It was a hard trial to the weeping sisters who hung around her departure to see with what serene tranquillity the unpardoned sinner, as they deemed her, could pass away to God.

But Markham's new faith fabric had been reared upon the clouds of sudden violent feeling, and no air castle was ever of more unabiding growth; doubt soon sapped it, and remorse, not for what he had done, but for what he had not done; and amidst the wasted ruins of his life, where the bare bleak soil was strewn with wrecked purposes and shattered creeds; with no hope to stay him, with no fear to raise the most dreary phantom beyond

the grave, he sunk down into the barren waste, and the dry sands rolled over him where he lay; and no living being was left behind him upon earth, who would not mourn over the day which brought life to Markham Sutherland.





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 NOTE VI.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE VII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE VIII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE IX.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE X.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XI.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XIII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XIV.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XV.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XVI.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XVII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
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 NOTE XIX.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XX.—On the Jewish Dispensation.

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 NOTE II.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE III.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE IV.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE V.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE VI.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE VII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE VIII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE IX.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE X.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XI.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XIII.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XIV.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XV.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
 NOTE XVI.—On the Jewish Dispensation.  
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